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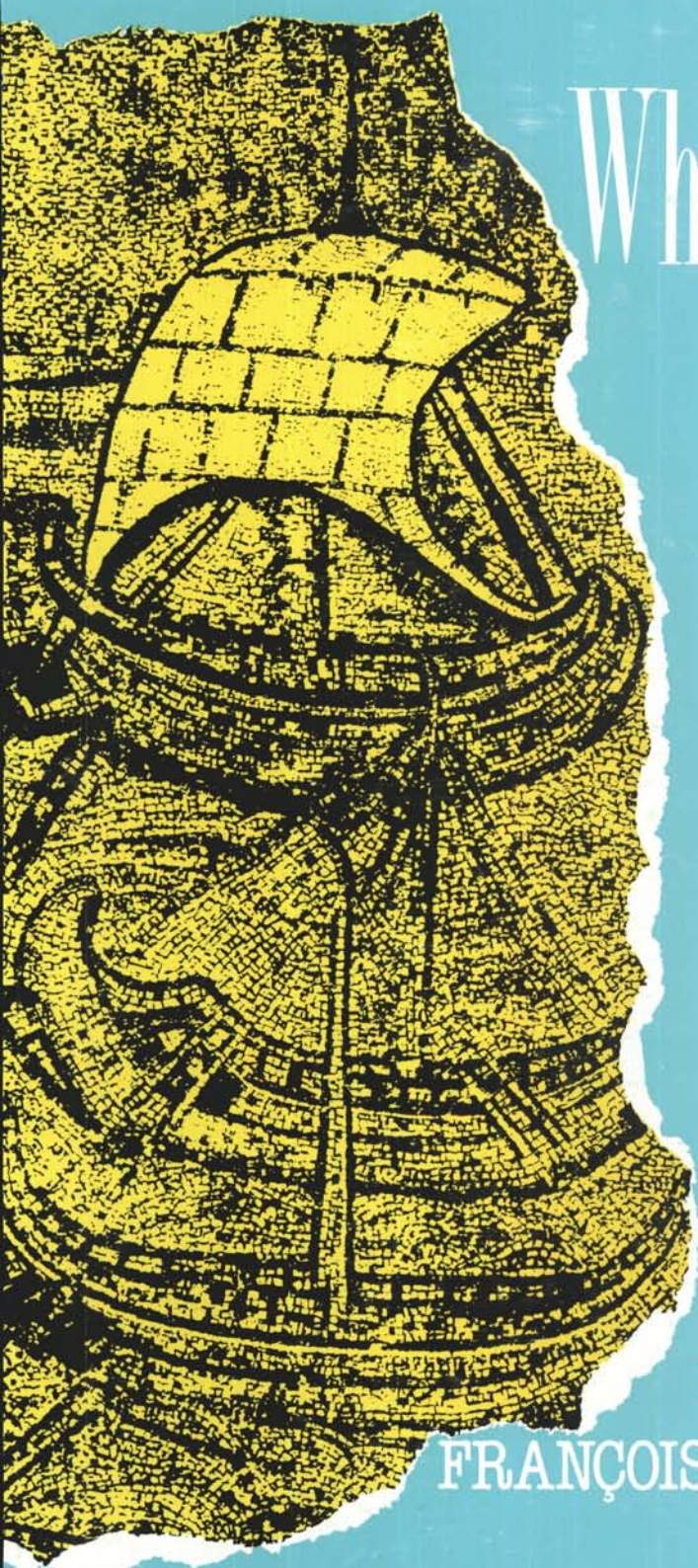

## Why Sail to Byzantium?
## Nicholas True

## Banks of the Danube
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## DOUGLAS EVANS
## AMERICAN MANDATE

## DENYS SUTTON ON THE V&A

## FRANÇOIS DUCHÊNE ON JEAN MONNET

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## CONTENTS


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Presidential Powers | *Douglas Evans* | 3 |
| Why Sail to Byzantium? | *Nicholas True* | 9 |
| No New Heroes *(story)* | *Felicity Carver* | 16 |
| Danube | *Claudio Magris* | 21 |
| Column | *M* | 27 |

POEMS

*Patrick Hare 15, Tony Roberts 26, Bibhu Padhi 29, Vernon Scannell 30, Laurence Lerner 41, Herbert Lomas 49*

MEN & IDEAS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| First Statesman of Interdependence? | *François Duchêne* | 32 |

NOTES & TOPICS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The Ossetian Connection | *Louis Rapoport* | 42 |
| Paris Notebook | *Jean-François Revel* | 46 |
| A Biography | *Gillian Tindall* | 48 |

BOOKS & WRITERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| No Way In, Go In | *Andrew Shelley* | 50 |
| Poet of the Pressure Group | *Jennifer Ramage* | 55 |
| Out of Order | *Dennis O'Keeffe* | 60 |
| Strategy Shift | *Max Beloff* | 62 |
| Books Encountered | *R.M.* | 64 |

CONTROVERSY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Illusion & Delusion | *Denys Sutton* | 65 |

LAW

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Crossing the Bar | *Anthony Hooper* | 69 |

IN THE MARGIN

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Saving Mr Rushdie? | *Anthony Hartley* | 73 |

BOXES

The Fallen Emperors *(Michael Psellus)* 12, Georgia On My Mind *(Stephen Jones)* 44

AUTHORS 77 — LETTERS 78 — LIFE & LETTERS 80


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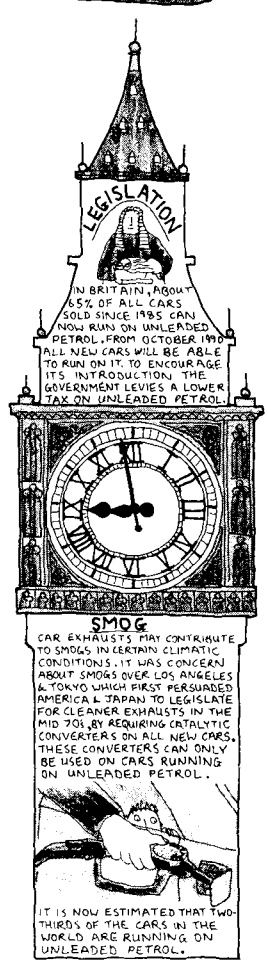


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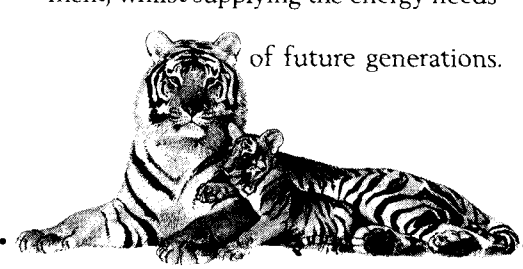

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*Douglas Evans*

# Presidential Powers

## *Political Legitimacy in a Transitional Era*

THE VIEW of the recent US presidential election as both superficial and negative is not confined to frustrated liberals; it has already assumed mythic proportions. On the eastern shores of the Atlantic there is an implicit assumption that because the debating skills of the chief gladiators would win few plaudits at the Oxford Union or at Westminster, they have failed to meet some ultimate standard. Those two television face-to-face debates, it is claimed, were contrived and over-rehearsed. Perhaps they were—and yet, given the size of the audience and the high stakes, this may have been inevitable.

In Britain, the parliamentary tradition is steeped in words like "mandate", and much effort and imagination are invested in drawing up detailed party manifestos. But in truth, except for a few controversial measures extracted by the media, few other than professional politicos attempt to digest the entire menu. So it is, too, in America, when an elected monarch is being sought with suitable democratic checks and balances. Thus, when a candidate urges people to vote for him on the primary grounds of his administrative competence (a quality more or less taken as given in previous elections), it is hardly surprising that his adversary should seek to define the qualities of his opponent on the basis of his record as a state governor. Michael Dukakis's experience was almost exclusively confined to state politics; he was implicitly parochial in his perspectives compared with the internationalist background of George Bush. The American people—sophisticated and unsophisticated, Democrats as well as Republicans—understood in the pledge-of-allegiance-to-the-flag and the prison-furlough issues the essential differences between the two candidates on defence and social policy, and to that extent the recent election campaign has very effectively allowed the voters to make an intelligent choice between two philosophies as well as between two men. That neither candidate proffered detailed solutions on the two deficits (budgeting and trade), far from being dishonest, is a mark of responsibility. Only in office, even transitional office, can such multi-dimensional problems be addressed—not least because, whatever options are adopted, they will emerge only from intensive Congressional and international diplomacy.

A more serious indictment of the presidential-election cynics is that they do not comprehend the scale of what has already been achieved in terms of the democratic process. The root of this incomprehension lies in a comparison of the United States with Britain. The 55 men who amended the Articles of Confederation to create the US Constitution saw quite clearly that the land was so vast that there would in times to come be more states and many more people. Two centuries later, less astute observers in Europe fail to take into account the fact that the United States covers an area greater than Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and European Russia together.

Only when we get down to demographics can realistic comparisons be made. It is hardly useful to parallel the governance of Britain, and its population of 55 millions, with that of the United States with its 240 millions. A much more appropriate comparison would be with the European Economic Community (320 millions) or the Soviet Union (280 millions). All are currently confronted with the challenge of meeting the twin expectations of sustained economic growth and an enlargement of the democratic process. Hitherto, prejudiced European observers have believed that the United States understood how to create wealth but was unsophisticated in the arts of government. If we are to make broad comparisons, however, it soon becomes apparent that the United States is incomparably the most politically mature federation of the three, and is also by far the most democratic. The EEC has made striking relative economic gains, but, unlike the US where the Reagan Administration has deliberately transferred power to the legislatures of the individual states, the EEC is bent on a centralising course which is likely to provide less democracy, rather than more.

WHEN THE FOUNDING FATHERS drew up the Constitution two centuries ago—a document that still actively shapes American political behaviour on an almost daily basis—they were profoundly influenced by kingship. The immediate experience of weak government under the Articles of Confederation had persuaded them that they needed a strong and continuing central authority, and so the office of President, which they enshrined in Article Two of their Constitution, was effectively for an elected monarch—removable every four years, but not subject to parliamentary votes of con-



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fidence as were British Prime Ministers then and now.

Every US President since George Washington has been elected as a non-hereditary monarch. Ronald Reagan instinctively understood this; and so, it is to be hoped, will George Bush as he mobilises public support for his policies. To compare either President to a British Prime Minister is merely misleading. At this early stage in a new presidency it is already possible to discern James Baker as virtual Prime Minister, through his experience and reputation with Congress, and his likely dominance in making foreign policy. Historically the Secretaries of State, of the Treasury, and latterly of Defence have enjoyed high prestige, but although, like a French Prime Minister, James Baker serves at the President's favour, his power (as Henry Kissinger's reign at the National Security Council underlined) rests on retaining the President's close confidence rather than on heading a great department.

The historical continuity of the American federation has been reinforced by a comfortably generous vote in favour of continuing the peace-and-prosperity programme of the Reagan Administration—which may well soon be put to the test, for the unanswered questions of the Budget and of external deficits will not go away, nor will they respond to any quick solution. They require gradual adjustments, clear signals, and a steady nerve—from the Federal Reserve as well as from the White House.

IT IS PROBABLY TRUE to say that the West has reached a watershed in the evolution of the post-War world: familiar economic, political, and strategic landmarks are all now candidates for review, and the legitimacy of institutions across Western and Eastern Europe alike is about to come under increasing scrutiny. In a transitional period such as the 1990s promise to be, it is more important than ever for at least one major player among the principal economic formations to retain an aura of democratic legitimacy, even of relative probity.

One can hear the scoffers. But British and Continental European observers of the US election should beware the contagion of America's liberal media Establishment, and not emulate their patronising tone toward "the common people". For, in the last analysis, the danger is not that our chief ally might reduce the scale of its NATO commitment, or seize the apparently intransigent protectionism of Europe's agricultural lobbyists as reason to justify a widening of protectionist measures in the industrial sphere—though either or both are possible, if not probable. A more fundamental risk is that the one great model of a democratic superstate could progressively become tarnished, robbed of the priceless capacity to inspire other nations.

Whatever excesses in trivialisation may have taken place during the last eighteen months, the presidential election probably served well enough the purposes which the Founders intended. However, the presidential office is being seriously challenged by other elements in the Constitution—and the weakest link in the legitimising role of the American governmental system is undoubtedly the Congress. This is especially true of the House of Representatives with its recent chronic abuse of its power of the purse, as defined in Article One, Section Nine, of the Constitution.

From Watergate through to the Iran-Contra aftermath, the House and the Senate have variously attempted to usurp presidential power in the sphere of foreign policy. This might just be tolerable if the Congress pursued a constructive global foreign-policy framework, with attainable goals. But it does not. Even worse, the House is out of touch with national concerns as opposed to local interests—a fault only slightly modified by the professionalism of most Congressional committees—and in consequence there is a fuelling of excess federal expenditure and protectionist legislation to insulate selected special-interest groups. Among its most striking foreign-policy achievements (accomplished by means of the twin policies of financial parsimony and political neglect) is consolidation of the supremacy of the Sandinistas over the Contras, leaving the Nicaraguan people to suffer one of the most incompetent governments in the world—as dependent as Cuba on billion-dollar Soviet subsidies.

In the recent US elections, 99% of all incumbents seeking re-election to the House were returned; even more revealing was the fact that 82% of House members won with more than 60% of the vote—casting serious doubt on the elective chances of any challengers. This was true of both political parties, as can be seen in the gerrymandering of the state legislators who are charged under the Constitution with redrawing Congressional district lines after each census. The present arrangements especially favour liberal Democrats, who, in return for campaign funding, willingly embrace those special-interest groups which advocate spending programmes. In the Congress at least, the Rooseveltian coalition is virtually indestructible.

IF THE POLITICAL LEGITIMACY of the House is in question, so by extension is that of the Congress as a whole, and ultimately that of the entire US government; at the very least, the balance of the Constitution's operations is being disturbed. Once, equilibrium between the chief organs of government was assumed to be a bipartisan goal; now it is becoming more and more a partisan issue, with Democrats seeking to enlarge the powers of Congress, where they have long been an entrenched majority, and Republicans attempting to retain as much power as possible for the presidency which they have controlled for four out of its last five terms of office.

The concept of separation of powers has remained vaguely defined—on an assumption by the courts that it was healthier for the struggle to be maintained. It was argued, moreover, that this semi-permanent tension provides the proverbial checks and balances known as countervailing powers. But that argument would only have substance if the public retained a high degree of confidence in the respective institutions as practical and efficient organs of government.

In the case of the Congress, public confidence has become steadily eroded over most of this century—at least since 1929, after which it ceased to act as a brake on public spending but rather spurred it onwards. This had its parallel in Britain, where from midway through World War I (pos-

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sibly from around 1916, when Lloyd George began to mobilise the war effort), the Cabinet as the executive has maintained a form of ascendancy over the legislature to which it belongs. The high tide for the House of Commons and the Congress alike probably came in the 19th century; in the 20th century the Congress has only rarely achieved wide public esteem.

The sustained presidential electoral campaigns and relatively high voting turnout suggest that the office of the American presidency is not now lacking in public confidence. The House of Representatives is another matter. In 1986 (the last off-year election) only 33% of eligible voters nation-wide cast ballots for the House—the lowest turnout since 1942. Plainly, voters have reacted to lack of competition among candidates by withholding their votes.

Since 1989 happens to be the bicentenary of the coming into force of the US Constitution, as well as of that even more famous historical milestone, the French Revolution, this may be an appropriate time to initiate a limited measure of Constitutional reform, including changes in the electoral requirements of the House and the means to produce the US Budget in a more orderly manner.

In general terms, the House has usually sought to increase its influence by eroding the power of the presidency—this has certainly been the case ever since the early 1970s, when, in the wake of Watergate, Congress passed the 1974 Budget and Impoundment Control Act which, by denying the President the right to refuse spending items, has engendered cumulative Budget deficits. The War Powers Resolution similarly restrained the President's power to act decisively in the realm of foreign policy, over the full range of political and economic aspects. This was illustrated in the severe restraints which the War Powers Resolution imposed on President Carter in his efforts to rescue the US hostages in Iran, and (a legacy of the Trade Reform Act of President Reagan's second term) in the compulsion to retaliate against foreign states over trade disputes where hitherto presidential discretion had been the final arbiter.

But there is another way to strengthen Congress without reducing the power of the President: by making the House more representative of national concerns. The principal route to such an enhanced reputation, not to say greater accountability, lies in amending the so-called "locality rule". As it stands in Article One of the US Constitution, the requirement is that an election to the House will be disqualified if a candidate is not "when elected . . . an inhabitant of that state in which he shall be chosen".

This has customarily been interpreted as confining the selection of Congressmen to residents of the Congressional District to which they seek election. Although originally designed to preserve the sanctity of local interests, it has increasingly become a severe restriction on the range of candidates; even more seriously, it has made Congressmen, once elected, more and more prisoners of powerful local interests. This trend has been accentuated by political action committees (PACs) which have bound the Congressman not so much to his total constituency as to its most financially active sectors. (Almost all sitting candidates defeated in the last election were involved in some financial indiscretion.) A Congressman and his PACs are virtually irremovable by any prospective challenger. Though PACs are a relatively recent phenomenon, pork-barrel politics is not, and the wisdom of the "locality rule" has been debated with varying degrees of intensity over the last decades.

The late D. W. Brogan, in his classic *An Introduction to American Politics*, first published in 1954, expressed even then the limitation in the potential standing of the House of Representatives:

> "Congress as a whole, and the House of Representatives in particular, cannot compete with the President as long as their membership is so arbitrarily limited by the geographical exclusiveness of the Constitution and by this gloss upon it. . . . The concrete pressure group is a nearby reality which can punish and reward. The national party can, indeed, reward if it is in power, but not by finding another seat in Congress, only by taking the public-spirited politician out of congressional politics, giving him a federal, appointive office and so further weakening congressional personnel. The locality rule, that is to say, further weakens Congress as a body framing a national policy, further reduces it to being almost a mere field force in which pressure groups, national or local, are at work to produce a result that may not be to the general interest of the United States, or of either party, or even of most of the pressure groups themselves."

Professor Brogan also observed that "the fact that the custom has the force of law shows that *the American people do not want a national governing personnel; they want local representation by local men*". This might have been true when Brogan first wrote it, but at least three trends since then suggest that reform of the Congress would be embraced by the American people—if it could be achieved.

It is a widely observable truth that many political issues (education, health care, and the environment, to take only three) have become national rather than exclusively local or even stateside concerns. Now that the funds available to incumbent Congressmen have become greatly enlarged and the jerrymandering of congressional districts by the party in power in the House has greatly restricted the voters' choice, the American public and American legislators (state as well as federal) should be more open to constitutional reform, on the assumption that enhancing the standing, efficiency and accountability of the House will confer upon it and upon Congress as a whole a legitimacy that has been for some time in decline.

Before I examine how that might be achieved, let the last word on the deficiencies of the present system lie with Brogan:

> "Representatives represent, in varying degrees, almost every interest in their district. . . . All this makes them peculiarly insensitive to any *national* opinion about them.

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> The nation cannot vote for them, and they need not consider what it thinks of them personally, unless they have an eye to the presidency. But it makes them keenly sensitive to local opinion. . . . That is why, to many a stranger, American national politics and speeches seem full of initiatives doomed to failure, proposals that are demonstrably half-baked, and parochial notions and conceits. . . ."

IF RESTORATION of the standing and legitimacy of the House of Representatives is to be accomplished, it is almost certainly by bringing to pass an amendment that continues the custom of local residence by a Congressman but removes the necessity prior to selection.

There are, of course, practical objections to its achievement, not least the Rooseveltian coalition of the Democratic Party, which has held unbroken sway in the House for more than 50 years. This is a notable achievement, but it hardly reflects a true barometer of national aspirations as reflected in the swinging pendulum of presidential election results over the same period. Under what circumstances would such a Democratic majority relinquish its monopoly? On the face of it—with majorities in both Houses, a Republican incumbent newly installed in the White House, and the opportunity to consolidate accretion of power to the Congress (a seemingly semi-permanently Democratic Congress) at the expense of the presidency—the Democratic Party would seem unlikely to embrace Constitutional reform. There is nevertheless an erosion of public confidence which both parties need to address if the legitimacy of American government is to be maintained. The most probable route would in effect have to bypass the citadel of Democratic power in the Congress by taking a course that has not hitherto successfully been adopted by any Constitutional amendment.

In Article Five of the Constitution two methods of amending its own provisions are laid down. The first and so far customary path has been by proposal of a two-thirds vote of both Houses. This would constitute an improbable scenario. The alternative would be the untrodden path of a Convention called by Congress on the application of the legislatures of two-thirds of the states. When the Convention's recommendations have been ratified by these legislatures, they become part of the Constitution. The only blocking threat available to the Congress lies in its power to decide which method will be used, and in setting the time limit for ratification.

For all this to be accomplished, the mood of underlying disenchantment would have to be harnessed in a sustained campaign of the need to "re-legitimise" the Congress by making it more accurately responsive to the national will and purpose. This will be all the more difficult to achieve because of the propensity of much of the US national media to tie itself to a vaguely liberal consensus, whatever the public mood—as was recently demonstrated by its complete lack of interest in the fact that Governor Michael Dukakis was running up a budget deficit of more than a billion dollars for his state of Massachusetts, and had had to borrow numerous times to meet the state payroll. Dukakis was finally forced to raise state taxes, although administrative competence was one of the main planks in his presidential campaign.

That incident is only one illustration of an alliance between the Congress and the national media which, though informal in character, is very real in practice. Under the Constitution it was always presumed that the press would act as a watchdog on the governmental process; and this has not ceased to be the general rule. Nevertheless, ever since the Viet Nam War and Watergate (when the Congress and the press developed an habitual alliance of interest and a general presumption that, in whatever cause, guilt accrued to the executive) these two institutions have made a profession of "de-legitimising" the only nationally elected American institution by denuding it of its powers.

ONLY BY constantly going over the heads of the Congress to the people was Ronald Reagan able to govern for two terms—the first President to do so since Eisenhower. Any President less well able to communicate and translate his vision into national policies may find the office more restricted than ever he imagined it could be. By his "hands-off" leadership style and his personal concentration on a limited number of key issues—for both of which he was heartily criticised in the media—President Reagan not only avoided much frustration but, possibly inadvertently, concealed the labyrinth of restraints that bind the modern office.

In seeking to find a consensus with Congress on the Budget, on burden-sharing in Defence, on a proper and balanced response to the Gorbachov agenda on Arms Control and conventional force reductions, the new President will be facing a very tough assignment. Some element of compromise on the make-up of the Budget may be unavoidable—though the presidential veto lies in waiting, ready to be invoked where public support is known to be strong. But to surrender further presidential powers could be serious in the long term. In the meantime, there is a possible Constitutional device available which requires no protracted process of constitutional amendment; it could both help to balance the Budget and, if applied on other issues, restore a better balance between the executive and the legislature (at least on financial Bills).

Congressmen have a habit of attaching local spending provisions to a Bill which they know that the President strongly supports. (He must currently either veto a Bill as a whole, or allow it to pass.) To cure them of this addiction, Milton Friedman favours a presidential "line-item veto" (a reform long advocated). He also argues that the President should veto sight unseen any Bill which is longer than the Constitution, and that a group of Senators should announce that they would uphold any such veto. Such a device, though very simple, could have profound consequences on Budget making and foreign-policy provisions; over time, it could help to redress the balance which has been swinging away from the presidency for nearly two decades.

To underline his belief in strengthening the prestige of Congress while simultaneously clipping its power to ob-

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struct, Professor Friedman argues for extending the term of Congressmen (currently a mere two years) while limiting, broadly in line with the rules governing the presidency, the number of terms which Representatives and Senators can serve.

These proposals represent one means of overcoming the problem of entrenched incumbents, but they would require Constitutional amendment. The situation is ripe for the establishment of a Constitutional Commission which could lay out the options in a bipartisan manner, emphasising that reform is in the national interest, not only in order to restore public confidence in the Congress and in the efficiency of its partnership with the White House, but to equip the US government to exercise its role as leader of the West.

ASSUMING THAT the Congress is indeed reformable, and that the principal instrument of political legitimacy remains the office of the Presidency, there are two principal means by which the US Government can provide a constant of political legitimacy for the West. These instruments are international economic leadership and the example of a steady and creative foreign policy toward a Soviet Union led by the most skilful but dangerously mercurial diplomatist to come out of the East.

It is probably true that the success of the Bush Administration's economic policy will rely heavily on the balance of power and the state of personal relations between the White House, the Treasury, the Federal Reserve, and the Congress. At this point, prospects for close collaboration between the first three appear promising, with James Baker at the Department of State playing the ringmaster. But will the Bush Administration use the Congress and the Omnibus Trade Reform Act as a stalking-horse to apply pressure on European and Japanese protectionism in agriculture? Or will Congress gain the upper hand in matters of economic as well as foreign policy? Senator Lloyd Bentsen, for one, has already pronounced that George Bush lacks a mandate to govern—presumably because of an absence of specificity about matters which come high on the Senator's economic agenda. The serious damage inflicted on President Reagan's Central America and South Africa policies by a Democratic Congress during his second term of office provides a salutary warning of Congress's power to wound if not to totally undermine Administration foreign policy.

At a more immediate level, what can be safely predicted is that the Texas ascendancy in the Bush White House will be quite as influential as the Californian influence in the Reagan White House. With an honorary Texan occupying the Oval Office, and Texans filling the posts of Secretaries of State, Commerce, and Education (not to mention a Texan Ambassador to Britain), there is promise of a distinct "Lone Star" flavour to the Bush Administration. However, these are no hill-billy, blinkered statesiders, but seasoned Washington professionals; in the case of the three foreign affairs portfolios, they have a great deal of international experience. By education and professional experience they may have acquired some of the gloss characteristic of the Eastern Establishment of the Republican Party, and so they are suspected by some of being too prone to favour the easy compromise when a principled stand is required. On the other hand they are true Texans, as addicted to winning as to Stetsons, and—as even their opponents ruefully admit—they have taken to politics as to their mother's milk.

Will the Texan White House be capable of providing political legitimacy to America in the 1990s as well as continuity for the West in economic and foreign policy? George Bush was elected with a generalised yet generous mandate, and it is safe to assume that the voters intended that he should carry forward the Reagan Revolution. No doubt there will be much less ideological rhetoric to galvanise the troops, as there is much less ideological conviction; but that is to be expected, given the difference in personality and background. The new President is likely to be an exponent of instinctive conservatism and, without jettisoning the economic fundamentalism of the Reagan era, he is likely to develop a better feel for ethnic and social questions. (This is not to say that he will interpret these questions in terms of inflated spending programmes.)

MEANWHILE, THE IDEOLOGICAL edge to the Reagan Revolution is being switched to gaining ground in the federal and state judiciaries, state houses and state assemblies, leaving George Bush to concentrate on consolidating what the Reagan years began. If we for the moment accept that the election of President Bush legitimised the continuation of the Reagan Revolution, we must also acknowledge that this also means legitimising the overall drift of Reagan's foreign policy, with its attempt to provide leadership for the West by the pursuit of a vigorous strategy. Bush does not desire to rest on Reagan's laurels in foreign affairs; nor can he afford to do so, for circumstances are changing rapidly.

The pace of political, economic and social change in both parts of Europe is likely to accelerate. For the foreseeable future, the situation in Eastern Europe is likely to become more fluid—creating opportunities for openings to the West. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union is likely to experience ever-greater internal instability as its economy staggers from pillar to post. The European Community's pursuit of 1992 threatens—despite repeated official assurances to the contrary—to create a "Fortress Europe" in trading terms. Because of this and because of differences between the United States and Western Europe on how to respond not only to Eastern Europe, but to Soviet foreign policy worldwide, and to Middle East terrorism, there are a great many potentially combustible issues between the new Bush Administration and the Governments of the European Community and NATO.

In the diverging American and European approaches and attitudes toward the Gorbachov leadership, there is a need to accept the philosophical differences in their pasts. The tradition of the French Revolution, which is to be celebrated and promoted as the first launching pad of 21st-century Europe, has never set great store on either continuity or political legitimacy. Since the Revolution, France has lived through two empires, five republics, and various other interregnums. At the moment she seems to be living out a

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centrist, non-revolutionary phase, but a much more polarised political tradition still lives on.

The American Revolution had strong philosophical links with "the Glorious Revolution" of 100 years earlier; both were "preserving revolutions" which maintained considerable continuity. The French Revolution—like the Russian and Iranian Revolutions of our own century—sought to erase the past order and as many of its operatives as it could butcher. This fundamental philosophical and practical divergence has, far from evaporating in the mists of the last two centuries, been cherished and burnished; it is more than likely to exacerbate matters when contemporary power struggles in the economic and defence spheres break surface.

In pursuing a stable economic and strategic global order—most especially in maintaining the superpower balance, and addressing the apparently eternal crises of the Middle East, the endemic problems of Central America, the millstone of Third World debt, and the rising spectre of protectionism—the United States is likely to find the internal factionalism of Japan's ruling party, the Liberal Democrats, a trifling irritant compared with the headstrong independence of many of her oldest Continental allies—notably West Germany in the area of defence, and France in the economic sphere. If the situation should deteriorate seriously, it could swiftly infect the new-found warmth in superpower relationships. A divided NATO alliance and an underlying fractiousness in economic relations between the European Community and the United States will provide a poor platform for negotiating new defence and commercial treaties with the Soviet bloc, whose leader has already demonstrated that he can take prompt decisions.

In the course of eight years Ronald Reagan restored the prestige of the presidential office. But the institutional powers of the presidency in relation to a Congress still lost in the 1970s have yet to be recaptured. It makes good sense, then, for President Bush exhaustively to seek accommodations with Congress, where this is possible without abandoning the goals of his Administration. For instance, he must avoid revenue increases likely to precipitate a recession, and for this purpose is relying on the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation to enforce Budget cuts across the board in October, but the existence of Democratic majorities in both Houses will almost certainly seek to force the issue of tax increases before then.

DOES "THE REAGAN REVOLUTION" represent a permanent series of changes? To the extent that "Reaganism" has come to be part of the prevailing orthodoxy of American government, it is part of the political legitimacy of America's leadership of the West. But "Reaganism", or at the very least "the Reagan era", also represents an adjustment so definitive in the eyes of the American people—in terms of the economic, military, and psychological rehabilitation of post-Viet Nam American government, and especially of the presidency—that the US Congress and the national media must hasten to restore their own standing.

Despite the ever-widening dispersion of global economic power (the degree of American predominance in the immediate post-War period was never likely to be maintained), with a greater parity between the United States, Japan, and the European Economic Community, the United States has no serious rival as leader of the West. This leadership patently rests on America's superior wealth, military capability, and political influence. But it also owes something to an unbroken democratic tradition, which has altered less than any other in 200 years. Notwithstanding the soothsayers of decline, such as Yale's Paul Kennedy, there are no Western challengers. Japan has no interest in assuming the role of a military superpower; it also operates a virtual one-party democracy. The European Community looks like becoming more than usually self-absorbed with 1992, and meanwhile its central institutions have yet to prove their democratic credentials.

The US presidential system reflects the single most important repository of political legitimacy in the West. When, as is their constitutional right, the Congress and the media challenge the President on major foreign policy issues, they should remember that the whole weight of public confidence abroad, wherever it exists, rests on the office of the presidency, and not on the Congress, which has proved itself generally unsuited to either the formulation or the execution of foreign policy. The Constitution—more powerful than any elected government, as it holds the three main elements in balance for posterity—is likely to be reinforced by Reagan's conservative appointments to the Supreme Court. When all the presidential prerogatives have been asserted, all roads to consensus explored, an assault on presidential power is probably unavoidable.

If in the Bush era Round One went to the Congress in rejecting the nomination of former Senator John Tower as Defence Secretary. Round Two appears to have been scored by the White House in the shape of the damaging Ethics Committee report on the Speaker, James Wright. This is a bitter blow to a Speaker who has sought to extend the power of Congress in foreign policy—most strikingly in his independent Central America initiatives—and is blamed by many for his obstruction of an early rescue of the savings and loan institutions before they accumulated debts in excess of 100 billion dollars.

As the current Defence Secretary, Dick Cheney, recently observed, the US Constitution was expressly designed to give much greater scope to the executive in foreign policy than in its domestic equivalent, not least because of the need for decisiveness rather than deliberation in the case of external threat. Defining the war powers of the Congress, the Constitutional Convention of 1787 gave Congress the power "to declare war"—but, as James Madison and Elbridge Gerry warned, "leaving the Executive the power to repel sudden attacks"; and, as Roger Sherman pointed out, leaving the President with the power "to commence war" (i.e., something stronger than the power "to declare war", which represents the process of formalisation).

As another Defence Secretary, Caspar Weinberger, dryly noted, in foreign policy the attempt to transfer power from the President to the Congress often proves in practice to be a denial of power to the government as a whole. Such transfers have an inbuilt tendency to immobilise the US government, while demoralising its most loyal allies. The case of the Nicaraguan Contras is only the most recent example.

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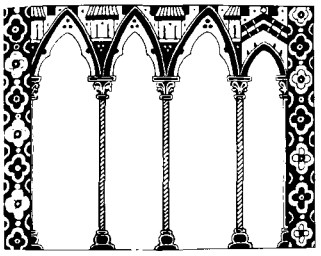
*Nicholas True*

# Why Sail to Byzantium?

## *The Dark Side of Europe's Moon*



"LIKE DANCING IN a Byzantine nightclub" was the eccentric description given by John Edmunds, of the Boilermakers' Union, to the confusing votes of the 1988 Trade Union Congress on the Conservative Government's Employment Training programme. However, exhaustive examination of Phaidon Koukoules's six-volume collection of references to aspects of Byzantine society, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos* (Athens, 1948-57), does not reveal the night-club to have been a characteristic feature of Byzantine life. Let us grant Mr Edmunds an imaginative turn of phrase rather than an exceptional flash of historical intuition. The essential point is that for him Byzantium implies complexity, impenetrability, and a hint of intrigue.

At least the night-club invokes certain other—perhaps more positive—images. Other recent "Byzantine" allusions are less equivocal. Take even the *Daily Telegraph,* where the Literary Editor presumably never questioned a reviewer's reference to the "Byzantine byways" of cocaine-trafficking in Colombia.

Three weeks' reading of newspapers, those moulders and mimickers of popular cliché, has revealed at least six other uses of the word *Byzantine*—a "classic Byzantine intrigue"; "Byzantine ramifications" (referring to the British Social Security system); "Byzantine network" (laundering of criminal money); "Byzantine twist" (politics inside the Labour Party); and (most familiar and twice repeated), "Byzantine-style bureaucracy". The bureaucratic tag is a catch-all: but its most frequent appearance is as a description of that institution so admired by the British, the Commission of the European Economic Community in Brussels. For, strangely, popular usage preserves an overwhelming negative image of Byzantium at a time when perceptions of Byzantium among a widening circle of scholars and enthusiastic amateurs have markedly changed.

It is now almost a quarter of a century since Sir Steven Runciman published his hugely entertaining *Fall of Constantinople* in 1965, a work archly damned with faint praise by one scholar as "uneven", and Professor Romilly Jenkins in 1966 raised some scholarly eyebrows with his deliberately readable *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries.* In the same years Volume 4 of the *Cambridge Medieval History,* dealing with Byzantium, was completely rewritten. After that, apart from *Byzantium: An Introduction* (1971), edited by that inspired and greatly lamented teacher, Philip Whitting, all again was largely silence until 1980 when two Professors, Cyril Mango and Robert Browning, published contrasting but stimulating general studies: *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* and *The Byzantine Empire.* Since then a number of equally approachable studies for "the general reader" have appeared on various aspects of Byzantine history and life. Byzantium is emerging from the byways and into the wider high road of intellectual interest.

How has this happened? Why should we be interested in Byzantium, an empire that covered parts of far-off countries about which the British know little and care less? What possible relevance to the Britain of today are the 1,131 years of political history which ended on 15 August 1461, when David, last Emperor of Trebizond in Northern Turkey, surrendered his city to the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmet the Conqueror?

IT MAY BE instructive to review the ways in which successive generations in Western Europe have looked on Byzantine Constantinople in the 538 years since its fall. In Italy, Agostino Pertusi published *La Caduta di Constantinopoli* (1976-83), a fascinating collection of contemporary and near-contemporary accounts of the Fall of Constantinople and the response to it. The three volumes have, sadly, never been reproduced in English. They show that, for all the shock and fear caused by the fall of this great Christian city to the Turks, there was little affection or understanding for the people or the culture of which it had been the capital. Centuries of religious, linguistic, political, and cultural division had bitten too deep.

In 1453, new problems concerned Western Europe's rising nation-states. Intellectuals in Italy and elsewhere had their own obsession in the rediscovery of Greek antiquity, and Byzantine scholarship played a significant, if often exaggerated, part in the revival of Greek studies in Florence, Rome, and Venice. Overall, however, Byzantium intrigued Renaissance Man not for itself, but as an intellectual museum to be plundered. Long after the fall of Constantinople, manuscript hunters combed the Greek world for



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ancient Greek texts for their patrons, with all the diligence of Victorian plant-hunters scouring the jungles of China for new species.

Professor Deno Geanakoplos has written fascinatingly on this aspect of late medieval Hellenism: but its time was done in the course of two generations after 1453. Well before the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66), Istanbul was provoking other, more threatening, thoughts. To all intents and purposes Byzantium was forgotten. The feelings of early Western scholars are still reflected in the patronising references of 20th-century schoolbooks: Byzantium played "a vital role in saving Greek texts for Western civilisation", but little else.

It was in the reign of that self-glorifying autocrat, *le Roi Soleil,* that western interest in Byzantine studies temporarily quickened. French academic interest had begun to grow in the time of Louis XIII: but it was under Louis XIV and Colbert that French Byzantine scholarship flourished. In 1648, the French Court began to sponsor a systematic edition of Byzantine writings, and among a circle of distinguished scholars none shone more than Charles Du Cange, the "first scientific historian of Byzantium", whose work is still valuable today.

Almost to the death of Louis XIV in 1715, worthwhile work was being produced. As the intellectual climate in France changed against the Sun King's concept of monarchy, however, so too did perceptions of the earlier imperial monarchy go into sharp reverse. Where one 17th-century editor spoke of Byzantium as "so amazing in the amount that happened, so attractive in its diversity, so astonishing in the length of its duration", Voltaire's crabbed comment has been long remembered. It still typifies the response of the Age of Reason, and of certain "progressive" thinkers much nearer to our own times: "This worthless history contains nothing but declamations and miracles. It is a disgrace to the human mind."

THE ASSAULTS of secular rationalism did not go unnoticed even in Constantinople. In 1793, the Orthodox Patriarch Neophytos condemned as among the great heresiarchs of history "the Voltaires, the Rousseaus and the Spinozas". But the views of Voltaire were also shared by Montesquieu, for whom Byzantium characterised a decadent Oriental despotism, and later by Hegel, for whom Byzantium was "a rotten edifice", "a revolting picture of imbecility" in which was "stifled the growth of everything that is noble in thought, action, or character".

The greatest and most devastating attack on the reputation of Byzantium came from England, from the pen of Edward Gibbon. It was Gibbon, at once a great writer and a great historian, who made popular that most remarkable of historical concepts: that the story of Byzantium was the story of a thousand-year-long decline. For Gibbon as for Voltaire, Byzantium signified "the triumph of barbarism and religion".

It was not until the middle of the 19th century, an era no longer self-consciously engaged in social and rationalist polemics, that a serious reappraisal of Byzantium began. Remarkable work was done by writers such as George Finlay (1799-1875), Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815-91), and Karl Hopf (1832-73). In Germany there began again, in 1828, a systematic publication of the writings of Byzantine historians. The efforts of many of these scholars were inspired by the creation of the modern Greek kingdom and by the desire to build a bridge through Byzantium to the classical past, rather than by any attraction to Byzantium itself.

Outside a restricted circle of scholars, however, the image of Byzantium remained generally negative. Any number of examples illustrate this—from its elegant dismissal by Sir Walter Scott in his Byzantine novel *Count Robert of Paris* (". . . if he commonly employed cunning and dissimulation instead of wisdom, and perfidy instead of courage . . . his expedients were the disgrace of the age, rather than his own", and ". . . in its trumpery etiquette . . . the Greek Empire resembled no existing power in its minute follies except that of Pekin") to the railings of W. H. Lecky in his *History of European Morals* (1869):

> ". . . the most thoroughly base and despicable form that civilisation has yet assumed. There has been no other enduring civilisation so absolutely destitute of all forms and elements of greatness, and none to which the epithet mean may be so emphatically applied."

AGAINST THIS CARICATURE it was perhaps not surprising that, as the century advanced, leaders of the "Decadent" movement in France, Britain, and Italy expressed approval of the idea of Byzantium. In their case, interest was not rooted in knowledge. A remarkable novel by Joris Huysmans, *A Rebours* (1884), created perhaps the ultimate in neurotic aestheticism. His Duc des Esseintes found even the novels of Poe insufficiently Gothic:

> "A book had to have that quality of strangeness . . . but he was inclined to venture further along this road, and to insist on Byzantine flowers of thought and deliquescent complexities of style; he demanded a disquieting vagueness that would give him scope for dreaming."

Significantly, Huysmans (as Des Esseintes) saw in Byzantium not so much a purveyor of art but an intoxicant that allowed the aesthete to indulge in fantasising and fantastic responses. The very strangeness and remoteness of Byzantium allowed the fertile and half-comprehending mind a freedom to roam. If religion was the opium of the masses, the mysterious East could be the opium of the aesthete. This influence was reflected in contemporary French art and even in music; in 1889 the level-headed composer Massenet brought to the stage his voluptuous opera *Esclarmonde,* whose heroine was a Princess of an imagined Byzantium—a Byzantium of romance and magic, far from reality.

Mario Praz in his *Romantic Agony* (1933) subsumed a whole period of late-19th-century decadent taste under the chapter head "Byzantium", and his example has been followed by later critics. This is, perhaps, not unjustified; but

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no doubt Praz's approach was over-influenced by the use of the label "Byzantine" by an influential group of intellectuals in his native Italy, ranged around the journal *Cronaca Bizantina,* between 1881 and 1885. Among them was the young Gabriele D'Annunzio, who combined the decadent fascination with the idea of Byzantium with hostility to the stereotype of an Empire which was seen as the embodiment of weakness, and a decline from the superior achievement of a martial Rome.

Even among the decadents the influence of Edward Gibbon was powerful. Their enthusiasms were but a distorting mirror of contemporary contempt—a feeling expressed in Giosuè Carducci's dictum on the corrupt, reunited Italy of the late Victorian era: "Italy called for Rome; they have given her Byzantium."

From this unpromising soil came some of the fathers of modern Byzantine scholarship. In Britain, John Bagnell Bury, a creator of the *Cambridge Medieval History,* emerged in the late 1880s. In France at the same time, Charles Diehl began his long historical career. Neither was without literary connections—Bury for a time taught W. B. Yeats. Was the influence of the great scholar, at once editor and overthrower of Gibbon, remembered when Yeats created his memorable imagery of the court of Byzantium by its gong-tormented sea?

Yeats's "Golden Smithies of the Emperor" evoked a response in other quarters. Perhaps no influence has been greater on the growing interest in the Byzantine world than the wider appreciation of Byzantine art. Again, this has been a phenomenon of more recent times.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Cretan painters in the orbit of the Venetian Empire had at first acted as a link between the two cultural worlds of Europe (this was ably illustrated in the 1987 Royal Academy exhibition, "From Byzantium to El Greco"). But the Cretans left little or no trace in Western Europe. Indeed, it is astonishing how evanescent was the influence of even so towering a genius as El Greco in Spain.

The prevailing attitude of the 16th century in artistic circles was as dismissive towards Byzantium as that of other groups. For the Florentine Giorgio Vasari, whose influence on later art historians was immense, the Byzantine style was produced by painters who were without inventive skill, "clumsy . . . awkward . . . crude, stiff, and mediocre . . . blindly following what had been handed on year after year". Cimabue, thought Vasari, led the Italian Renaissance by "breaking decisively" from the "dead tradition of the Greeks". And there the argument rested for centuries.

Again, it was only in the later 19th century that a few dissenting voices began to raise murmurs of sympathy against the general disapproval. Even so intelligent a collector as Robert Curzon had been cool about Byzantine painting. From the middle of the 19th century, the works of Adolphe Didron in France and of Lord Lindsay, Charles Texier and Richard Pullan in England began to supply a corrective. John Ruskin, an admirer of Lindsay, also used his immense influence in praise of Byzantine sculpture and architecture. However, he knew Byzantium only through Venice, and his understanding was imperfect.

Such defenders were exceptions, even through to the 1890s. A quarter of a century after Ruskin had published *The Stones of Venice,* the 1876 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* could—as David Talbot Rice points out in *The Appreciation of Byzantine Art* (1972)—almost completely ignore Byzantine art. Yet Ruskin's obsession with the Byzantine and the Gothic in Venice bore fruit. William Morris and his Arts and Crafts followers derived from Ruskin some enthusiasm for Byzantine art as one aspect of medieval craftsmanship. Morris's friend W. R. Lethaby published some of the first serious architectural studies of Byzantine building, and in the same late Victorian period the architect J. F. Bentley was moved to create London's extraordinary Westminster Cathedral in a partly Byzantine idiom.

As the 20th century advanced, systematic field work in the discovery of Byzantine monuments gathered pace. With some exceptions, a scholarly consensus emerged that Byzantium had created an art of surpassing interest and excellence. Only distance and politics delayed wider dissemination of this truth.

Byzantine monuments of outstanding importance were lost in the two World Wars and in the Graeco-Turkish war of 1920-23. Proper restoration and publication of many of the finest monuments of the Empire had to wait until after World War II: and much still remains to be done. But restoration, publication, new discoveries, and mass travel have since 1945 begun to open to a wider world the art of Byzantium, presented with a freshness to the eye and a thoroughness of understanding not seen since these works were created. Publications like those of Paul Underwood on the Kariye Djami in Istanbul (four vols, 1966-75); of Otto Demus on the early mosaics of St Mark's in Venice (four vols, 1984), or of Doula Mouriki on Nea Moni in Chios (two vols, 1985) are among the finest examples of art-historical publication ever accomplished. They make the masterpieces of Byzantine art available to a wider audience, and represent only some peaks among a growing range of scholarly works which are documenting the physical legacy for posterity. And Byzantium has descended from the heights of Olympian scholarship to the lower ground of general readership more frequently of late. Never have the conditions for appreciating Byzantine art been so favourable.

WHY, THEN, IS THERE ground for concern? Has not the battle for understanding been won? Would that this were so. The distinguished popular historian John Julius Norwich, after successful studies of Sicily and Venice, has recently published the first in a projected three-volume history of Byzantium.[1] In seeking a review of this work, *The Sunday Times* called on the journalist and novelist Philip Glazebrook. Has any intellectual progress been made in the 200 years since Edward Gibbon? One might doubt it. "A GUIDED TOUR THROUGH A CHAMBER OF HORRORS" was the sub-editor's headline, and it fairly summarises a review which intones the sterile Western prejudices of centuries.

[1] *Byzantium: The Early Centuries.* By JOHN JULIUS NORWICH. Viking, £16.95.

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The Classical world, says Glazebrook (as might any Victorian schoolmaster):

> ". . . provided for posterity an exemplary pattern of mortality and conduct. . . . Such a preceptorial use cannot possibly be made of the senseless and irrational barbarism of Byzantium. That lamentable history has awaited an age of historiography which has dispensed with a moral apparatus. . . . All the world at that time had sunk into an abysmal swamp of faithlessness and cruelty. . . . These crowded ugly years must be the unhappiest in recorded time."

No Lecky, no Voltaire, no Gibbon could have been as harsh.

Nor is Glazebrook immune to the Rationalist's pretext for scorning Byzantium. "The passion with which men held their religious beliefs in past ages shows how little a modern reader can be expected to share or even understand such vehemence." Yet perhaps he may be too dismissive of his contemporaries—even Modern Man has more vision than this. We increasingly sense the limits of the secularist's world-vision. One does not have to read Greek to feel that the refinement of Christian theology by the Byzantine Church Fathers was one of the profoundest achievements of human spirituality and philosophy, or travel to Kashmir to realise that Byzantine mysticism was of a rare quality. One does not, I dare even say, have to know God to feel Him through the medium of the masterpieces of Byzantine art. Surely, with all that we know of the capacity for cold, dispassionate evil in the 20th century, we do not have to condemn an ancient people who held their faith with passion.

It is true that Lord Norwich has catalogued many cruel deeds, some of them as much the stuff of legend as of history. But can we, who daily endure the judgments of television news editors as to what is worthy of record in our time, condemn as irremediably "barbarous" a civilisation whose historians chose to highlight the equally terrible news of their own day? I cannot believe that an absence of "moral apparatus" leads people today to feel the attraction of Byzantium. It may even be the reverse—an absence of the bigotry and self-righteousness which condemn what is alien as inferior and what is half-understood as opaque or ignorant. Surely a readiness to see in the mosaics and frescoes of a Kariye Djami or the icon of the Virgin Nicopoia in St Mark's (revered even today by the cynical city of Venice) evidence of a deep spiritual sensibility reveals a moral apparatus rooted in eternal verities rather than in the frailties of reason.

Byzantine civilisation saw many changes in its millennium-and-more of history, and recent historians have rightly emphasised the capacity for changes in the Empire, challenging the concept that it was an immobile, sterile world. All this is fair: political structures, social conditions, city and countryside significantly changed; styles in art and literature altered. However, the foundation of popular belief always remained the teachings of the Bible and the traditions of the Orthodox Church.

THAT UNIFYING force of Orthodoxy was perhaps the major influence that sustained Byzantium over 1,000 years. A ground of conflict with the Catholic West, it provided common ground with the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe and Russia, who derived—and still derive—their faith from that source. The Orthodox liturgy, from time to time presented on our television screens as an image of the exotic, has for centuries been the inspiration of the nations of Eastern Europe and of their precursors. It is as much part of the fabric of those societies as once in Western Europe were the Latin Mass and the Cranmer Prayer Book, now so sadly

## *The Fallen Emperors*

MOST MEN *who have set themselves to record the history of the [Byzantine] emperors have found it surprising that none of them kept his reputation untarnished in every particular. Some won greater praise for their conduct in early life, others impressed more in their later years, and while some preferred a life of pleasure, others dabbled in philosophy, only to confound the principles they had elected to follow and end in muddle.*

*For my own part I find such inconsistency nothing to marvel at; on the contrary, it would be extraordinary if someone were always unalterable. Of course, it is possible that you may discover some private citizen who pursued the same undeviating path throughout life, from the very beginning to the very end (although there cannot be many examples of such consistency), but an emperor, one who inherited from God supreme power, especially if he lived longer than most, would never be able to maintain the highest standards all through his reign. In the case of the private citizen, his own nature, plus a good start in life, may be sufficient to ensure virtuous behaviour, for the simple reason that he is not over-much troubled by outside affairs, nor do external events have any effect on his private disposition.*

*How different it is with an emperor, whose private life is never, even in its most intimate detail, allowed respite from trouble! Consider how brief are the moments when the sea is calm and peaceful, and how at other times it is swollen, or lashed by waves, as Boreas, or Aparktias, or some other storm-wind disturbs its rest—a sight I have seen myself again and again.*

*An emperor's life is like that. If he seeks recreation, at once he incurs the displeasure of the critics. If he gives rein to kindly sentiments, he is accused of ignorance, and when he rouses himself to show interest, they blame him for being meddlesome. If he defends himself or takes blunt reprisals, everyone levels abuse at his "wrath" or his "quick temper". And as for trying to do anything in secret—Athos would be more likely to hide itself from human gaze than an emperor's deeds to escape the notice of his subjects.*

*No wonder then that no sovereign's life has been blameless.*

*Michael Psellus (1018-c.1078)*
FOURTEEN BYZANTINE RULERS

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being harried out of existence by "progressive" clerics with no feeling for time beyond the present or for nations beyond their own.

To that Christian philosophical base, the small circle of the Byzantine intellectual élite added relics of classical tradition and the imperial heritage of Rome. Homer is perhaps their most quoted authority after Holy Scripture, while to the end what we know as the Byzantine Empire was styled by them "the Empire of the Romans". As late as 1393, when the bounds of that Empire had contracted to little more than the confines of Constantinople, the Oecumenical Patriarch Antonios IV (1389-97) could write warning the Grand Prince of Moscow to show proper respect for the "Roman" and Christian Emperor. His letter is worth quoting in *extenso,* as it shows the self-confidence of the Byzantine state even in adversity. (Perhaps only the Chinese have been able to assume a posture of such timeless preeminence over politically more powerful outsiders.)

> "Even if, by God's will, the Turks have surrounded the Emperor's realm, yet up to this day the Emperor has had the same election by the Church and the same prayers, and is anointed with the same great myrrh, and is elected Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans, that is of all Christians. And the name of the Emperor is commemorated in every place in which there are any who call themselves Christians—which honour no other ruler holds. And such power has he from all men that even the Latins [i.e. Western Catholics] themselves, they who have no communion with our Church, even they give to him the same honour and subordination that they gave in the early days when we were united."

This self-confident fusion of Christian faith and a sense of imperial destiny gave Byzantium its special character. It was this as much as the economic power drawn from the Empire's position at the junction of trade routes to the East, and from the surprising agricultural wealth of medieval Turkey, that sustained the Empire for so long and gave Byzantium the capacity to absorb and to assimilate peoples who had once battered at its borders as enemies. A political entity without such a decided but widely-shared deposit of principle, of tradition, and of belief could never have endured so long. Yet, paradoxically, it was this claim to an exclusive religious Orthodoxy and to a unique imperial legitimacy that divided and still divides Europe today.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to claim in the era of *Glasnost* that the study of Byzantium and of Orthodoxy is "irrelevant". The breaking of Europe's back dates back to these times. Over centuries, the heirs of Rome—divided by language, by geography, by religion, and by politics—have grown apart, into two streams; the one Latin-German, based on the Roman Catholic Church and its Protestant offshoots; the other Graeco-Slav and rooted in Orthodoxy. This division has persisted, perpetuated in the historic spheres of influence of Ottoman Turkey and Imperial and now Soviet Russia.

Even so, it is an absurdity that in 1989 we in the West in speaking of "Europe" can refer simply to the Western part of the continent. Today we are called to look into the mind of Russia and the nations of Eastern Europe. We should try to understand their formative religious and cultural inheritance from what Professor Dimitri Obolensky in an outstanding historical work (published in 1971) has called "The Byzantine Commonwealth". Certainly the growth of interest in the history of Byzantium and of the Orthodox world has coincided with a growing fascination with the future of Russia and the Orthodox East. Perhaps an opportunity is opening for a reconstruction of understanding between the two halves of Europe so that each may understand more of its own strengths and what in the common inheritance it has lost.

It will be the task of many years to break down the misunderstandings of centuries, encapsulated in 1453 in the celebrated dictum ascribed to the Grand Duke Lucas Notaras, senior Minister of the last Byzantine Emperor: "Better the Sultan's turban than the Cardinal's hat." The Byzantines could never accept the pretensions of the medieval Papacy to temporal power, or to the supreme and sole governance of Christendom. They could not accept alterations made by the Catholic Church to the Creed and to the practices of the Church. They could not accept the claims of Western rulers to parity or better with "the Empire of the Romans". They *knew* that their Empire, beleaguered as it had been so often across the centuries, still somehow embodied the destiny of Christian peoples.

In Byzantine popular belief the end of the Empire would prefigure the Second Coming of Christ. In Byzantine state imagery the court of the Emperor was thought to reflect the Heavenly Court of which it was the earthly equivalent—depictions of the Court of Heaven in the mosaics of Ravenna or of Istanbul show how its image was based on the imperial court of Byzantium.

In the mid-10th century a Byzantine Emperor, Constantine VII, stated why he had written down for his son the myriad seemingly stylised ceremonials of the Imperial Court:

> "So may our imperial power, being employed with measure and order, reflect the harmonious movement our Creator gives the universe, and thus may our Empire appear to our subjects more majestic, more pleasing and more admirable."

Order, harmony, grace, a sense of eternity. . . . The "trumpery etiquette" derided by Sir Walter Scott had its own deep purpose—to affirm the timelessness and the majesty of the Empire, and to impress observers from inside and outside its boundaries.

To me this image proved seductive; to others it has seemed stagnant, dull, or barren. I was turned to thoughts of Byzantium first by the writings of Steven Runciman, whose gift it has been to combine the arts of the historian and the charm of the natural author. The appeal was cemented when, as a young student, I walked the hills of Greece in search of Classical marble, only to fall under the spell of Byzantium in the monasteries of Daphni and the Hosios Loukas—and above all on the quiet hillside of Mistra.

That contrast between the arid grandeurs of the Classical

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temple and the intimacy of the Byzantine Church could not have been more striking. Seen from without, few Byzantine churches (Haghia Sophia excepted) are prepossessing. The greatness lies within, in the evocation of the world of Heaven through mosaic, through paint, through marble; through the smells, the sounds and the words of the Liturgy. Classical construction is the art of public ritual; it externalises the observer, pushes him away from individual spiritual involvement. The decorated Byzantine church can only be appreciated from within. It surrounds the individual, provoking private thoughts of the spiritual world. That reaction is also shared socially; the Orthodox sense of community, of those dead and those unborn as well as of the living, is profound.

THE EMBERS OF BYZANTIUM have today grown cool. Early Russian chronicles tell how, before the Russians were converted to Christianity, the pagan Grand Prince Vladimir sent his envoys throughout the world to compare the faiths that were on offer. Islam had its appeal until the Prince heard that vodka would be forbidden; Judaism until he heard its adherents were scattered across the face of the earth. Roman Catholic Christianity failed to charm, for in their services "there was no beauty". Then the envoys went to Byzantium, and reported:

> "They led us to the place where they worship their God; and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth; for on earth there is no such vision nor beauty, and we do not know how to describe it; we know only that God dwells there among men,"

So Russia was converted to Orthodoxy, and the foundations of Moscow as the Third Rome were laid. Last year Soviet Russia celebrated the millennium of that picturesque conversion.

This sense of the beauty and the spirituality of Byzantium can today be sensed but rarely—in Mount Athos as the *semantron* calls the community to nocturnal prayer; in a candle-lit St Mark's where the light flickers in the golden domes; in small painted churches in the mountain villages of Cyprus; in the nunnery of the Pantanassa at close of day on the hill of Mistra; and in many other parts of the Orthodox world. Once felt, it exerts an irresistible appeal which provokes an interest in the civilisation that produced it. Even if the history were not so extraordinary, if the art were not so refined, that legacy of Byzantium would justify its study.

Lord Norwich has undeniably felt the call of this 1,000-year civilisation. In the preface to *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* he describes how he felt it in his first visit to Greece, and reminds us that he produced almost a quarter of a century ago a book about the Holy Mountain of Mount Athos. Lord Norwich wants people to share his enthusiasm for Byzantium. He wants to engage the attention of many more of those who perhaps have been bussed from a Turkish *Club Mediterranée* to the rock monasteries of the Göreme valley, or have stepped ashore from an Hellenic cruise to visit Nea Moni on Chios or St John's on Patmos.

As ever in his books, a lively tale is told, although the straining after liveliness has at times taken him outside the strict confines of history and into legend and fiction. For example, the imputation of motives to the Empress Irene (797-802), blinder of her predecessor and son, for seeking an alleged marriage to the Emperor Charlemagne, fills a page of the purest imagination.

A further defect of the book is its reliance on outdated authorities. In the bibliography, well over half the works consulted date from before World War II. Basic recent works are not cited and it is evident that not many have been consulted. A serious example is the treatment of those 6th-century hooligans the Circus Factions. The Blues and Greens of the chariot races were supported by fans whose louche hairstyles—the front of the head shaved, while at the back the hair was allowed to hang down in a dense mass—would have graced the Chelsea Shed or the Millwall Den.

For long, scholars believed these factions to represent political parties, bound to contrasting social groups and religious sects. Much of this was exposed as fantasy in 1976 by Professor Alan Cameron in a major study. For Lord Norwich, however, little has changed. His account of the factions could have been written 50 years ago. It is unfair to expect the non-professional historian to have read the learned journals, but major books published by major houses might fairly claim closer attention.

The book has also been carelessly edited. For example, one illustration purports to show the Emperor Anastasius I (491-518)—a supporter, incidentally, of the Red circus faction, and not of the Greens as Lord Norwich asserts. In fact, the ivory is of another Anastasius altogether. One Emperor, Martinianus, is consistently misnamed Martianus; while the most powerful man (or, rather, eunuch) in Byzantium in the mid 5th century was not Chrysaphus but Chrysaphius. These are niggles: they form, however, an exemplary rather than a exhaustive list.

IF ALL THIS seems discouraging, it should not be taken as unqualified criticism. *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* is a good yarn. If it further stimulates interest in Byzantium, I would be the last to complain. It is generally accurate within the limits of its reading. However, I would not suggest that the sixth-former or university student should lay aside his copy of George Ostrogorsky's *History of the Byzantine State* (first published in 1940), outdated though it too is in some respects. Nor would the Hellenic cruiser err if Robert Browning's concise *Byzantine Empire* were to elbow this hefty volume out of the travelling-bag. Browning succeeds in treating the art and architecture of Byzantium as effectively as he does its history; Lord Norwich does not pretend to give such an account, but in a work of this length his references to the visual arts are disappointingly thin.

Where Lord Norwich is undoubtedly right is in stressing how unrecognised is the debt of Western Europe to Byzantium. This was the power which blunted the main assaults of the Arabs and absorbed the movements of the Slavs. This was the power which held at bay the pressure of the Turks for over a quarter of a millennium. It would not have been a disaster had those assaults succeeded earlier, but the character of European civilisation would undoubtedly have

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been different.This was also the power which, particularly from the 9th century on, copied and recopied the texts of Greek antiquity, and enabled much that might have been lost to be preserved to our times.

The charges that are levelled against Byzantium today—its complexity, its bureaucracy, its alleged propensity for intrigue—reflect old prejudices. Where Western Europe was deficient, Byzantium retained such humdrum but essential tools of government as an effective system of taxation; a relatively stable (albeit with certain hiatuses) monetary-based economy; a formal structure of civil administration; a generally enduring pattern of higher education (for the élite, at least); secular as well as religious learning; a political system which embraced peoples of different race and creed; a capacity to put into the field at first a citizen and later a substantially professional army; a society where promotion was open to the non-aristocrat; and a code of laws, applying to all classes, which is still studied in modern legal schools.

These are prosaic virtues. It is true also that life for the rural peasantry was touched by only some of them. However, we should not neglect to acknowledge the achievements of a state which could sustain them when elsewhere in Europe they were maintained at best with difficulty and frequently not at all. The arts of good government may seem complicated, over-subtle, or dissembling; but they are arts none the less. To call the Byzantines devious, effete, arrogant, or convoluted is to ape the invective of medieval times. We should not forget that to the Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates our own ancestors were "money-loving, philistine, gluttonous, violent, and forever reaching for the sword". Perhaps we can recognise some of those characteristics in ourselves; or perhaps caricature at least is common to the cultures of Eastern Europe and West. Let it rest at that.

This is the first century for over 1,500 years in which an educated man asked to list the great cities of the world would not place Constantinople-Istanbul near the top of the list. Yet each year as many Western travellers pass to the East as ever passed on any medieval Crusade; modern travel overcomes the factor of distance, and political frontiers are beginning to loosen. Byzantium at last is slowly taking the place it deserves. For too long it has been the dark side of the moon in European culture. Our neglect of its contribution and our ignorance of its culture have been our own loss.

"One of the two eyes of Christianity has been put out", wrote the Pole Jan Dlugosz in 1480, after Constantinople had fallen, all but abandoned by the Western powers whose misunderstanding of its culture had matured into contempt and neglect. "It was", said Dlugosz, "the enormous victory of the Turks; the extreme ruin of the Greeks; but the shame of the Latin West."

That ignorance, that shame, our generations have an unequalled chance to redress.

## Light Imagined

Someone has passed through here ahead of us,
A fading presence shut
Behind each door, and we are rooms away
Catching at happiness.

The ever-open eyes of those long gone
Watch us from the walls.
Around this sewing-glass there shone the gaze
Of daughters kept at home.

In a blackened mirror the devil haunts
The self-admiring face.
Adam and Eve like guilty votarists
Steal through their woven trees.

In paintings of light imagined, heroes go
Ashore in dreamed-of harbours, a hand
Is transfigured by the candle,
A bearded figure stoops above his joy.

Someone ahead is tapping on stone. Freshness
Raises our dead flowers.
The outer door is unblocked. With a shock light falls
In one piece, perfect. Air
And birdcalls. Those outside
Smiling at their secret
Draw us fainting into the radiant garden.

*Patrick Hare*

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*Felicity Carver*

# *No New Heroes*

TELLIN. CARPET SHELL. COMMON WENTLETRAP *(CLATHRUS CLATHRUS)*. The self-conscious Latin, suggesting dreams of scholarship in unsteady capitals, made Kevin smile. There were careful divisions in the box that held the shells, made with pieces of card painstakingly sellotaped to the sides. He picked out a limpet, roughened and grained like old bark on the outside, the interior silk-smooth and feminine. He thought of the day when they had gone to the seaside, when he had suffered the empty yawning feeling of car sickness while crouched in the back seat, when the roar of surf and shingle on an Atlantic beach had almost deafened them, and his mother had complained fretfully of the cold. He found it difficult to visualise her now.

They had not realised then that the cold she complained of on the beach would not be cured by the heater in the car or the loan of an extra jacket. He could not recognise her in his own or his brother Michael's face. The only picture was a watercolour, framed, and hanging in the room downstairs.

It seemed wrong not to be able to remember in a place that had survived on memories. His father had lived on them finally, other people's rather than his own, immersing himself in Irish history like a convert to a new religion, talking endlessly of Connolly and Pearse, to anyone he could trap into listening. There were still exercise books in the drawers of his desk, full of poetry his father had tried to write, ballads on Kilmainham gaol and the Easter Rising. As the scholar in the family, Kevin had been asked to approve and had been embarrassed because they had seemed naive. He was ashamed of his father for having written such bad imitative verse. It had often seemed as though the people in the poems were more real to the old man than himself and his brother Michael. As the eldest, Michael had taken over the running of the farm long before their father had died, though they pretended he was still in charge and reported back to him about the harvest and new calves, and consulted him on what to plant in the long field. The old man had not tried to pressure them into his beliefs; he had not thought it possible for the two of them to feel as strongly as he had. There could be no new heroes, only the old ones.

Apprehension stiffened Kevin's fingers. He dropped the shell and grovelled on the floor, inhaling carpet dust as he searched under the bed. Bella and the Hoover never penetrated this far. There were old papers, festering socks and other clothing he didn't recognise, black seed-like mouse droppings and a couple of paperbacks. The mice had eaten part of the mattress, also some of the paperbacks; there were small chunks of foam spat out in heaps of beige confetti.

Why had he ever asked Alison to stay here? It wouldn't work, it couldn't. It had seemed so possible in his room at university where he spent some of his days and occasional nights with her. There, his home was what he described to other people, something mildly quaint and Irish; dangerous too, he'd made much of living on the border. Now he was faced with discovery. He should have known she would accept; she was interested in politics, going to meetings, sometimes chairing them, coming out enthusiastic, full of what had been said about the troubles, the solutions. She had adopted Ireland a while ago, needing a cause to fight for, having none of her own. He thought it was probably why she had taken up with him in the first place, though he didn't share her convictions. When Kevin went to a meeting he felt like a man outside a television shop watching the screens without the volume—only there it was the volume without the action, hollow palms clapping, the beer-breath of students, cigarette smoke shrouding their faces like the aftermath of a bomb.

"You're so negative." It was one of her words that term. She picked up phrases and discarded them later like old clothes. Involvement's something else where I come from, he thought. Where the past is a soft peatbog trembling under your feet. They were all caught up in it, his brother, his father.

Waiting for Alison to come, he took up his part-time job at the hotel where they greeted him with friendly suspicion.

"You won't want to be talking to us any more, not with all that education."

"All those exams and still working in a dump like this."

"You're the bright one, maybe you can tell us how the wiring works. The fuse is gone again."

And when he couldn't tell them, they were happy because it proved that practice was better than theory, wasn't it. Or there was Joe who had been at school with him, earning money as the barman, dextrous with glasses and different drinks and girls. Smooth-



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talking Joe would never need books to get where he was going.

"What's the point in going that far away? You can do well enough here, can't you?

"There's Dublin for you, surely to God it's not that bad."

Watching their small interests, the farms, the businesses, what won at the Curragh, the border patrols. Everyone in and out of each other's thoughts. And Michael, his brother, apparently content with the land.

"You must be having a great time of it over there. All those demonstrations, and the parties."

"Oh yes." He had given up saying he worked a long time ago, they didn't want to hear it, he had to live out their fantasies. They knew, they read the papers, watched the telly. What could he tell them?

"Don't put those crates there, not now, we want them over this way where Joe can get at them easy." Jackson fussed, cleaning his hands on the towel tied round his waist. "What's your brother doing now, I hear he was in the north last week. Is the meat in the cold-store yet, the day's too hot for it to stay out long. Quite a man now, Michael, isn't he?"

There were long afternoons on the farm turning the straw in the warm wind, driving alongside the combine while it spewed out a stream of corn into the trailer. When he stepped out of his clothes at night, grain fell from his pockets, chaff and husks from the folds, gritting underfoot like shingle. Dust shook from his hair, the pillow grew blond with it.

THE ARAN SWEATER bought in a tourist shop was too thick for the September afternoon. There were small beads of moisture on her nose, and the high-heeled boots wobbled on the rough tarmac by the bus-stop.

"I didn't think you were coming."

"I sent you a postcard."

The day brightened for him, he seized her bag and threw it into the van with a feeling of ownership. He found himself talking all the way to the farm, pointing out landmarks like the tinkers' caravans parked on the old roadway, wondering at his own volubility. He took her into the house through the kitchen, noticing Bella hadn't cleaned it, realising too late it was her day off. The place was crowded with clothes hanging like flayed skins from a pulley near the ceiling, while a frying-pan full of solidified fat rested on the stove with a weird hallowe'en-mask design etched on its surface. He made coffee and they sat drinking it. Her eyes were half-covered by the dark curling hair. She's here, really here, he thought, absently picking pieces of dog-meal out of the fruit bowl.

When Michael came back in the evening, Kevin was nervous, hoping for his approval, angry with himself for needing it.

"I've heard a lot about you", she said. Michael was wary of offending because Kevin was there watching.

"No good, I'll bet."

"Not much." Alison laughed, and Kevin was sure he could hear what Michael was thinking. Why couldn't you find someone of your own kind? She's English, isn't she. He could feel the unspoken phrases in the way Michael put down his glass.

Next day he phoned the hotel to say he couldn't come, there was too much to do on the farm, listening happily to the annoyance at the other end. Then he found Alison an old pair of wellingtons, and they went out walking over the small fields, past the broken-toothed walls, the hills fringed with rough woodland. There had been talk of selling the farm once, when a developer was looking for land nearby, but the thought had seemed like a betrayal and they had left it, the new houses being built a couple of miles away by the village.

A helicopter surfaced briefly above the trees like a submarine coming up for air, hovering beside a church, then plunging down with the speed of a pheasant avoiding the guns. There were small figures moving over a field a long way off.

"Soldiers." He pointed. She followed the line of his hand. "That's the north over there." What your political friends talk about, he thought.

"Is your brother with the IRA?"

"Why should he be?" He was aware the question wasn't an answer.

"I saw the books on the shelf in the kitchen. The ones about the Rising, Irish history."

"They were my father's books. You should have met him, he was the keen one."

Somewhere in the distance there was the spitting sound of a ricochet. "Probably a rabbit", he said. "They get bored."

She wasn't afraid, though.

There had been that other day, hot and thundery, the scent of cut grass heavy on the air. A large white house with wide windows that stared defiantly out over the countryside near Drymen, with Alison's parents, middle-aged, middle-class, sitting at a wide table trying to discover a mutual friend who could provide a reference for this strange young man their daughter had brought home. Afterwards Alison and he had walked by the burn at the end of the wood, past a paddock where ponies stood in the trees' shade. A black and white spaniel frolicked in front of them, then began digging at the bank in frantic haste. It yelped suddenly and rolled on the earth, biting furiously at its sides. Alison had run forward, had brushed the angry wasps away and pushed the dog into the water, submerging it in the pool, scraping the insects from her own clothes, while the dog pawed at its face and whimpered, eyes swelling. Kevin had been unable to move; when he had read *1984* he had known it would be wasps or bees waiting for him in the cage, not rats, that he would yell, "Do it to her". Then Alison had shouted at him to help, and he had heard the scorn in her voice and had come up too late

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to be of use. Later he had bathed the lumps on the back of her neck with vinegar, her mother's remedy, and kissed the small swellings that whitened under the pressure of his fingers, inhaling the sour smell of her disfavour.

At lunchtime in the kitchen Bella came in and slapped the plates of food down, great humpbacked potatoes swimming in a sea of gravy, and left a bowl of fruit reduced to some unrecognisable pulp on the side.

"She doesn't approve of you", said Kevin.

Alison was dissecting the meat, trimming the fat off it. He caught Michael's eye and looked away. Then he cut the fat off his own so that she wouldn't be the only one, and scraped the plates into the dog's bowl when they'd finished.

"I'll be away now", said Bella. "Maybe you'll manage the supper. Perhaps she could heat it up." The third person reduced Alison to an indeterminate status like someone who is mentally handicapped.

"I'm sure I can, it's kind of you to leave something." Bella wasn't to be won over. She put her hands by her sides like a drill sergeant and turned away.

"What did I do?"

"You're here with the two of us. Competition. That's enough for her."

It was the horse that helped Alison and Michael to understand each other. He had found her looking over the loose-box door and asked if she could ride.

"Of course." Kevin remembered the ponies in the field at Drymen, fat and idle in the sunshine.

The long-legged four-year-old was awkward as a teenager, lumbering out of the stall, scraping the flaps of the saddle on the door, staring intently into the distance while Michael gave Alison a leg-up. Then they were out in the soft earth of the field, hooves cutting great scars in the grass as the horse plunged, humped his back, and exploded into bucks, great wild leaps that took him off down the slope with the girl balanced on his back, her long legs reaching down and holding his sides, laughing as she turned him at the far end and made him circle, wheeling and twisting until his back flattened out again and he dropped his head and with heaving flanks floated over the grass to the gate, looking like the horse he would be one day. There was a red mark on Alison's cheek where a branch had caught her, an exhilaration in her face which Kevin hadn't seen before, and her eyes were full of the space of the sky and the swooping horse.

Michael was smiling with her. "I thought he'd have you off."

"No bother, he's great."

Kevin grudged their excitement, he didn't share their admiration for the sweating animal, the hair ruffled with sweat on the shoulders, the hooves shifting restlessly. He had endured ponies for a while because there had been no option, but later his ability for school work had let him become a different person and given him an alibi. Alison's hands were darkened with the grease from the horse's mane, he could smell it on them still when they were in the house afterwards. When she rubbed her fingers together it flaked off in small curls like shavings from a rubber.

"Don't you ever ride?"

"Not now. And never that one, he terrifies me, he's only half-broken. Weren't you frightened?"

"I like being scared." He looked at her and didn't understand, and was afraid suddenly at the gap between them.

THAT EVENING he went out with Michael to the barn to help with hay for the cattle who stamped and moved in the straw, a few beasts being kept in till they calved. Their breath was warm in the half-darkness; he could smell muck, clean fresh hay, and the sweet reek of last year's silage.

"I'll be away tonight." Michael was leaning over the old gate they used as a partition. Kevin felt his stomach tighten as he stood on the concrete passageway, hearing the rustle of rats in the straw.

"All right", he said.

"Enjoy yourself then." He swore softly, aware of Michael grinning, feeling himself dismissed like a child.

When he lifted the latch on her door later and slipped in, she was still awake.

"Where was the car going?"

"It was only Michael."

"What's he doing?"

"I don't know myself, he keeps it that way."

The sheets were cold at the side of the bed. He shivered beside her, nervous at being with her here in the house.

He knew Michael was back when he went to shave in the morning. There was already a rim of dark hairs and soap round the basin, blood-flecked foam from tooth-cleaning. Michael always had trouble with his teeth. Kevin scrubbed at the basin, suddenly fastidious.

Michael was frying eggs in the old grease of the pan. When Alison came down there were all kinds of questions in her face, and something of the reverence of a small boy meeting his football hero. Kevin tasted hot fat, blistering his tongue, watching her eyes on Michael's unresponsive back.

"What was it?" she asked him later, washing the plates under the tap.

"Don't know. Smuggling maybe."

"Is that all?"

"There's money in it."

"It's not just for money, though, is it."

He wanted to say, don't glorify it, don't make him into something he isn't. He's my brother, he's a chancer, he takes risks, they all do. And if you quote all that Marxist-Leninist stuff at him he wouldn't know what you meant, the theory doesn't bother him,

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that isn't why he's in it. He was born into it. The day he accepted the farm he inherited the old man's dreams. He didn't have to find his war, it was on his doorstep, and I didn't realise what it meant to him then, not till a couple of years ago.

In his own room later he turned on the radio and listened to the news, but there was nothing about the north, only the visit of some Minister from London.

Alison rode the horse again the following day, cantering easily round the field while they watched from the gate, and when she came back he saw her face was alive as it had been the previous time. Flecks of foam danced off the bit, caught on their shirts, spattered on the ground as the horse sidled through the gateway.

"He's got quality", said Michael. "So have you." She smiled and Kevin turned away as she slipped down off the horse.

He took her out for a drive later. He would show her it all, why not. She wanted to see for herself, that's what she'd said. They crossed the border with only a perfunctory search of the car, and he drove to one of the nearby towns, where they bumped over the ramps in the road outside the police station, the barbed wire high on the walls. Armoured vehicles moved swiftly through the streets, heading for sanctuary. They left the car and walked into the centre, and the shops were like any high street, full of people and children.

"I could be at home", she said, disappointed.

I am, he thought.

He did not like to ask how long she was staying, he didn't want to put dates to it, limit his fantasies. Instead she wanted to try and help with the farm; he drove the baler and took her on the tractor with him, standing behind her while she tried to steer it, his arms round her waist. They cleaned up the fields for Michael following with the plough, seagulls wailing round his head like new-born babies, the machine stuck to the grooves like an old record. She made some kind of cake that he hadn't eaten before, with cinnamon and ginger stolen from Bella's cupboard on her day off. Another time they burned the old stubble in the field down by the wood, and had a job to put it out at the far end, beating furiously with bundles of branches ripped from the trees after the wind changed, winning finally when a gust diverted the flames, giving them time to stamp it out. They collapsed exhausted, smelling the smoke on their clothes and hair, laughing, their energy spent, the prickling stubble scarring the backs of their necks. He had rubbed his eyes with his hands, and dark specks had floated over the sun when he opened them.

Other days she went riding, with Michael walking beside her. And then Kevin became aware when he woke in the morning that she was down in the kitchen early, when Michael got up, making the tea, grilling bacon because she wouldn't let them eat all that fat. Helping out, she said later when Kevin asked. I want to be useful, not just a guest. But he knew she listened like a dog for the steps on the stair and began to watch her, wondering why he had asked her to come. When he went to her room one night she was cool, pleading stiffness after the riding, and his hurried assertive movements were clumsy because he was afraid, giving her the excuse to avoid sleeping with him. He had gone back to his own room holding the hurt like a drawing clasped to his chest so that no one could see it. He knew that Michael had no interest, she was Kevin's friend from college, that was all, and could not bring himself to end it.

When the message came he was outside, carrying a bucket full of water that slopped into his boots when he opened the door of the stable and the horse pushed its nose at him. He shoved at the animal. Get over you bastard, he said with affection, and the horse blew at the water, snorting, turning its reflection into a monster.

He didn't hear Alison until she spoke. "That was the phone. A friend of your brother's." Something in her voice made him look round.

"Something up?"

"They didn't have time to say much, it was a call-box. And the accent, I didn't get all of it. A place, a crossroads, they want you to pick him up."

Damn him. Oh, damn him. He didn't want to get in the van, to go out and drive into whatever it was that Michael was involved with.

"You'll have to go."

He was driving one fist gently into the other in his desperation. "I suppose so."

"For God's sake, he's your brother. I'd go but I don't know where it is."

"What makes you so righteous?" They glared at each other over the roof of the van. "It's not a game." If it wasn't for her pushing him he'd be away already. It wasn't her business, was it.

"I didn't think it was. Are you going then?"

He was back in the kitchen at Drymen, inhaling vinegar, hearing the scorn in her voice.

"Of course."

"I'll come with you." She was in the front seat before he could stop her. "It'll look less suspicious anyway."

They crossed the border on the same road, but this time the guards went through the car and made them get out.

"Panic on?" He wanted to provoke them, his powerlessness annoyed him; if he was being dragged into their war he would fight it.

They didn't answer, just waved him through.

With the aid of an old frayed map they waited at the side of a narrow road, a high bank protecting them, watching the crossroads a couple of hundred yards beyond. Rain streamed down the windscreen, and water had leaked through the rubber seal on the

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door, flooding the pocket and creating a sodden mass of old rags and petrol-station coupons for glasses.

"I never imagined being involved, not like this."

He slid his arm across the back of her seat and put it round her shoulders, settling himself, but she began to talk.

"You and your brother, you're not really that alike, are you?"

Do we have to be, he thought. "How?"

"I'm not sure. He's different from most of the people I've met, like someone who's been abroad for a long time, who's travelled to places I'll never go."

"He hasn't been away much, mostly just the north. And once to London."

"I didn't mean that."

He didn't want her to work towards it, he tried to change the subject, but she wasn't to be put off.

"It's as if he's done something that changed him. Like a long illness, or being in a war. Another country where the rules, the way things are done, are different, ours don't apply. Except the other day, he was like anyone when we were down in the field trying to put out the fire. But sometimes I feel he's not there at all, he's living somewhere else."

"A different reality." He wished he hadn't found the words.

"You do understand then."

"Oh, I understand. But I don't want to go there."

"I would."

"You like being scared."

"Is that wrong? It's so safe where I live."

His fear was something that seemed to move in the rain by the crossroads, or walking into a Belfast pub with Michael and realising they were in the wrong territory, seeing the glasses stop half-way to gaping mouths. The windows blowing out before you heard the noise, seeing the car jump in the air, feeling the blast on your face. It was a drug, he had seen Michael high on it, and Alison too the day she rode the horse. But you didn't have to go looking for it, did you? He had it now, a sick taste in his mouth as he peered through the windscreen at the road, sensing movement. He wound down the window.

Why do you have to talk about him all the time, he thought. His feet were growing cold; he pushed them against the pedals, listening to the rain. He should have brought some whisky. It would have helped with the waiting, the darkness.

THE NOISE WAS like hailstones pattering on the tarmac, it took him a moment to realise what was happening.

"Jesus, let's get out of here." He let off the brake and rolled the van down the hill without lights, turning on the ignition, letting it jerk into life, rubbing the misted interior, huddling against the wheel.

"You can't go, not yet."

"We can't stay, that's for sure." Something hit, scraped along the flank of the van. "They're shooting out there for God's sake!"

"But Michael."

"He's late, he won't come."

"He asked you to wait!" She was clutching his arm.

"He's got more lives than a damn cat, that one. Can you see him?"

She peered through the back windows, then opened the door and leaned out.

"Be careful, you don't know who it was back there. See anyone?"

"No."

"Well then." He changed gear.

"We should have waited."

"What for, he may be back by now anyway." She grabbed at the steering-wheel but he pushed her away.

"He asked us."

"If we crash it'll be no good to anyone. Forget your bloody boy-scout loyalty."

"Suppose he's hurt."

"Did they say so?"

They crossed into the south on a small lane little better than a cart track, driving through a farmyard to reach the road the far side, and got back to an empty house and the dogs leaping at them in welcome. He tried to kiss Alison in the passage outside her room, but she made it clear she didn't want him to. "Wait a minute, look", he said, but she shut the door.

Michael came back at midday; the dogs heard him first and slipped out of the barn, then Kevin went, afraid of what he might see, but Michael was only tired. "Thanks anyway", he said, and they laughed with relief and opened cans of beer in the kitchen in celebration, while Alison who had expected anger and recriminations looked on with incomprehension.

"She doesn't understand anything", said Bella cheerfully, slicing apples into a bowl. "She's packed. I didn't think she'd stay."

When she came downstairs Kevin took the bag from her. "I'll drive you to the bus station." She didn't acknowledge his offer, but she climbed into the van.

On the way he said, "We did the right thing, he wasn't coming anyway."

She was staring out of the window, watching cloud shadows race over the fields.

"Did you know that in 1916 when they had printed copies of the Proclamation they couldn't put them up because they forgot the glue?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It seemed significant."

"You were going to leave him, weren't you?"

"No", he said. He heard the lie in the small space of the car, against the rattle of the broken exhaust. I left him because you liked him, not because I was afraid. Do it to him, that was what he had thought. Bella's right, she doesn't understand anything. And he was happy because she was going and there would not be another betrayal.

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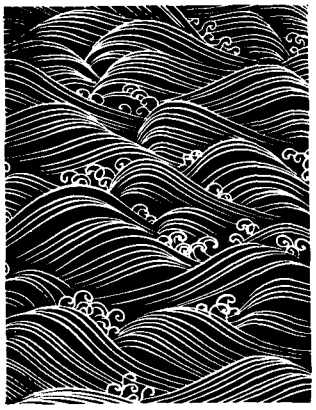
# *Claudio Magris*

# Danube



THE RIVER has many names. Among some peoples the words Danube and Ister were used respectively for the upper and lower courses, but sometimes for the entire length. Pliny, Strabo and Ptolemy wondered where the one ended and the other began; maybe in Illyria, or at the Iron Gates. The river, which Ovid called *bis-nominis* or double-named, draws German culture, with its dream of an Odyssey of the spirit, towards the east, mingling it with other cultures in countless hybrid metamorphoses in which it finds its fulfilment and its fall. The German scholar who travels fitfully along the whole course of the river carries with him his baggage of fads and quotations; if the poet entrusts himself to his *bâteau ivre,* his understudy tries to follow the advice of Jean Paul, who suggested that on the way one should gather and record not only visual images but old prefaces and playbills, railway-station gossip, epics and battles, funerary and metaphysical inscriptions, newspaper clippings, and notices pinned up in taverns and parish halls. *Memories, impressions, reflections and landscapes on a voyage to the Orient,* announces a title of Lamartine's. Reflections and impressions of whom? one may ask. When we travel alone, as happens only too often, we have to pay our way out of our own pocket; but occasionally life is good to us, and enables us to see the world, if only in brief snatches of time, with those four or five friends who will bear us witness on the Day of Judgment, and speak in our name.

Between one trip and the next we attempt to transfer the bulging files of notes on to the flat surface of paper, to get the bundles of stuff, the note-pads, the leaflets and the catalogues, down on to typewritten sheets. Literature as moving house: and as in every change of address something is lost and something else turns up in a "safe place" we had forgotten about. Indeed, we go almost like orphans, says Hölderlin in his poem on the sources of the Danube: the river flows on glittering in the sunlight like the current of life itself, but the feeling that it reflects back is an illusion afflicting the dazzled sight, like the non-existent luminous spots on the wall, the neon dazzle.

A tremor of nothingness sets fire to things, the tin cans left on the beach and the reflectors of motor cars, just as sunset makes the windows blaze. The river adds up to nothing and travelling is immoral: this is what Weininger said, as he was travelling. But the river is an old Taoist master, and along its banks it gives lessons on the great Wheel and the gaps between its spokes. In every journey there is at least a smattering of the South, with hours of relaxation, of idleness. Heedless of the orphans on its banks the Danube flows down towards the sea, towards the supreme conviction. . . .

A bold hypothesis was recently set forth by Amedeo, highly esteemed sedimentologist and secret historian of red herrings. He proposes that the Danube is born from a tap. Without wishing to summarise the age-old library of publications on the subject—they stretch from Hecataeus, predecessor of Herodotus, to the issues of *Merian* magazine, on news-stands now—we should at least mention the aeons for which the source of the Danube was as unknown as that of the Nile, in whose waters it is in any case reflected and mingled, if not *in re* at least *in verbis,* in the comparisons and parallels between the two rivers which for centuries tread on each other's heels in learned commentaries.

The river's sources were the object of the investigations, conjectures or information of Herodotus, Strabo, Caesar, Pliny, Ptolemy, the Pseudo-Scymnus, Seneca, Mela and Eratosthenes. Its sources were imagined or located in the Hercynian Forest, in the land of the Hyperboreans, among the Celts or the Scythians, on Mount Abnoba or in the land of Hesperia, while other hypotheses mention a fork in the river, with one branch flowing into the Adriatic, along with divergent descriptions of the Black Sea estuaries. Whether it be from history or from myth—which has the Argonauts sailing down the Danube as far as the Adriatic—that we pass to prehistoric eras, our reconnaissance is left groping in the dark and lost in vastness, in geography on a titanic scale: the *Urdonau* in the Bernese Oberland, with its springs, where the peaks of the Jungfrau and the Eiger now rise, the primordial Danube into which flowed the *Ur*-Rhine, the *Ur*-Neckar and the *Ur*-Main, and which towards

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the middle of the Tertiary, in the Eocene Age, between 60 and 20 million years ago, had its mouth where Vienna now stands, flowing into a gulf of Thetis, primal mother of ocean, in the Sarmatic Sea which covered the whole of South-eastern Europe.

In his great work of 1785 the Danubian Antiquarius (pseudonym of Johann Herm. Dielhelm) speaks of a house on Mount Abnoba, from the roof of which one gutter pours water into the Danube, and the other into the Rhine. He also mentions, further, an inn at the highest point of the Freiburg road, known by the name of Kalteherberg, cool hostel, the roof of which slopes two ways, one side pouring its water into the Rhine, the other into the Danube. So the matter of gutters has from ancient times been a *Leitmotif* in the debated question of the sources of the river. Certain it is that in the profoundly erudite discourse of the Antiquarius the gutters pour their water into a Danube that was already in existence, whereas according to Amedeo's theory that gutter *is* the source of the Danube, is the Danube itself. We know so very little, and before getting on our hind legs and spouting about the truth, we ought to debate problems at least twice, as did the Goths who, for this reason, so appealed to Laurence Sterne; that is, once when drunk and again when they had slept off their hangovers. Anyway, the Goths also took their oaths on the god Ister, and in some inscriptions in Rhaétia the god Danubius is put on the same level as Jupiter Optimus Maximus.

## *Vienna*

AT ONE OF THE first tables on the left as you enter the Café Central, sits a dummy of Peter Altenberg, with his deep-set, melancholy eyes and his famous walrus moustache. Among the crowded tables Altenberg's dummy sits quietly reading the newspaper. Seated close by, I sometimes lose sight of the fact that this motionless moustachioed gentleman, with his old-fashioned clothes and vaguely familiar air, is a dummy. As often happens in the café, I steal a glance at my neighbour's newspaper. It could well be today's, the one the rest of us are reading; maybe a waiter slips it between his fingers every morning.

At these café tables in Vienna, in the early years of the century, Peter Altenberg—the homeless poet in love with anonymous hotel rooms and picture postcards—wrote his lightning, impalpable parables, his tiny sketches of minute particulars (a shadow on a face, the lightness of a footstep, the brutality or the desperation of a gesture), in which life reveals its graces, or else its nothingness, while History betrays its still imperceptible cracks, omens of a forthcoming sunset. My artificial neighbour concealed himself in the halflight of that sunset, hid in anonymity and silence, and moreover—reduced to hunger as he was in the slump after the First World War—turned down the offer of a job, on the grounds that he could concern himself with nothing but bringing his own life to a close. At these same tables sat also a certain Bronstein, alias Trotsky; sat to such an extent that one Austrian minister, informed by the Secret Sevices of preparations for a revolution in Russia, is said to have replied, "And who on earth is going to make a revolution in Russia? I suppose you're going to tell me it's that Bronstein who sits all day at the Café Central!"

That dummy does not remind us of the real-life Altenberg, for he himself, as he wrote his little fables on those little tables as a shipwrecked sailor scrawls on a floating plank, knew how the true and false in life were muddled together, and would not have regarded himself as being more genuine than a waxwork. One's own life was a theatre in which there were also spectators, and Altenberg himself cautioned us not to take it any more seriously—nor any less—than a play of Shakespeare's, to feel ourselves both inside and out of it at the same time, to sally forth for a walk when we feel like it, at night for a breath of fresh air, and to mingle the real with the unreal.

At the Café Central one is indoors and out at the same time, or at any rate that is the illusion one gets. The glass dome far above, covering a kind of winter-garden, lets in so much light as to make the panes invisible; yet no rain ever enters. The mainstream of Viennese culture had unmasked the increasing abstraction and unreality of life, ever more absorbed by the mechanisms of collective information and transformed into a stage performance of itself. Altenberg, Musil, and their great contemporaries realised, in the very depths of their being, how hard it was to distinguish existence, even their own, from the image copied and reproduced in countless imitations: the false rumour of a financial crash as distinguished from the very real crisis caused by such a rumour, which sends all the customers racing to retrieve their savings, or the Mayerling tragedy as distinct from the *cliché* that makes it a drama. Those who lodged a complaint against the whole idea of making a show of life, though without kidding themselves that they were immune from it, are themselves now on show. That convincing dummy of Altenberg represents this fiction to perfection, and Vienna is the proper setting for this depiction of the depiction of real life.

But the literary strays and tramps who scribbled away at these tables—ironical, disappointed men—were putting up a last-ditch stand for individuality, for the last slivers of bewitchment—something that is itself and only itself, not to be reduced to the assembly line. The hidden, inaccessible truth, for them, was not a non-existent thing, and above all they did not gloat over the death of it, like the wordy theoreticians of insignificance. In Vienna contemporary reality identical to the performance of itself, like that so brilliantly portrayed by Robert Altman in his film *Nashville*, is superimposed on the baroque sense of the world as theatre, in which everyone, even without knowing it, acts out roles and parts of universal significance. Our discreet wooden neighbour, however, suggests that we should not take what is happening too seriously, that things go as they do partly and chiefly by chance, and that they could perfectly well go quite differently.

WITTGENSTEIN'S HOUSE. This is to be found in the third district, at 19 Kundmanngasse, as the guide-books conscientiously tell us. It is the famous house built in 1926 by Paul Engelmann for Wittgenstein, who had a share in the design.

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At first it seems that this house, commissioned by Wittgenstein for his sister, does not exist at all, because the street numbers skip from 13 to 21. The roads are all up, in the throes of "works" which seem to have been abandoned. With a little trouble we discover that the house is on the other side, and that the entrance is in Parkgasse. With its series of cubes jammed one into another and its dirty, yellow-ochre colour, the building looks like an empty box. It is now the seat of the Bulgarian Embassy, which occupied and restored it in the 1970s, and of its cultural section. It is six in the evening, the door is open, a few windows are lighted, but no one is to be seen; there is a table on a veranda with four upturned chairs. Prominent in the garden are two large bronze statues of Cyril and Methodius, the two Slav saints, plainly not put there by Wittgenstein.

The geometric rationality of those architectural forms, commissioned by the philosopher who so implacably investigated the possibilities and the limits of thought, at this point appears to reveal a pathetic uselessness. One wonders what Wittgenstein expected from that building: whether he wanted to build a house or prove the impossibility of a real house, or what once was called hearth and home. Who knows what limits its square forms were ideally intended to trace in his mind, what inexpressible spaces and images they were supposed ascetically to leave out.

THE LIES OF THE POETS. In a poem written in about the middle of the 16th century, Wolfgang Schmeltzl compares Vienna to Babel, because he says he hears people round him speaking Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, French, Turkish, Spanish, Bohemian, Slovenian, Italian, Hungarian, Dutch, Syrian, Croatian, Serbian, Polish, and Chaldean. Certainly the Greek saying warns us that the poets tell us many lies and exaggerate, but all the same. . . .

IN KARLSPLATZ, not far from the Vienna Opera, the imitation entrance to a gigantic tent covers the façade of the *Künstlerhaus,* which at present houses the chief of the many exhibitions devoted to "The Turks Before Vienna", it being the third centenary of the siege and battle of 1683, one of the great frontal encounters between East and West. Visitors momentarily get the impression of entering the vast pavilion of an Ottoman general, the tent which Kara Mustapha, commander-in-chief of the Turkish army, erected in splendour and magnificence in the vicinity of the present church of St Ulrich, in what today is the seventh *arrondissement* of the city.

The immense dimensions of the imaginary tent do in any case call to mind the figure of the Grand Vizier who embodied the Ottoman cult of all that is grandiose and exorbitant. In some of the 25,000 tents of the Turkish army which had since the beginning of July 1683 been surrounding Vienna, Kara Mustapha had also lodged his 1,500 concubines guarded by 700 black eunuchs, amid gushing fountains, baths, luxurious quarters set up in haste but with opulence.

The Vizier's head is now preserved at Vienna in the History Museum, which—next door to the *Künstlerhaus*—also houses one of the exhibitions. Defeated on 12 September 1683 by the imperial troops commanded by Charles of Lorraine, together with the Polish army led by their king, Jan Sobieski, Kara Mustapha was pursued from the field and defeated again at Gran. At Belgrade he was met by the emissary of the Sultan, who brought him the silken cord with which the lords of the Crescent who had fallen into disgrace with their sovereign, "the shadow of God on earth", were strangled. Having laid out his prayer-mat, the Grand Vizier offered his neck to the executioners and accepted his fate in the name of Allah. When, decades later, the imperial armies conquered Belgrade, someone dug up his body and brought the head in triumph to Vienna.

When the visitor enters the imitation pavilion, he instantly becomes himself one of the figures in the exhibition, and is uncertain whether he is just daydreaming as he imagines himself a prey—one of the countless prisoners led as slaves to the invader's tent—or else a predator, one of Sobieski's knights who for a whole day after the victory sacked the camp and despoiled even the tent of Kara Mustapha.

The aim of the exhibition is not to set the victors against the vanquished, still less the civilised peoples against the barbarians, but rather to give the feeling of the futility both of victory and of defeat, which follow on each other's heels for every nation, like sickness and health or youth and old age in the case of individuals.

As he walks round these rooms the Western visitor may consider that the victory of September 12th, which saved Vienna and Europe, was a thoroughly good thing; but he does not feel himself to be son and heir only of the swords of Charles of Lorraine and Jan Sobieski, or of the cross brandished by the great preachers who incited people to defend the faith, such as Abraham at Santa Clara, according to whom the liturgical canon must give place to the cannon of the artillery, or Marco d'Aviano, the Capuchin from Friuli. Walking among those victory trophies, which are also the relics of a shipwreck, the visitor feels himself rather to be the son and heir of a history unified in its fragments, though these are scattered like objects in a pillaged encampment; a history composed of crescents as well as crosses, of Capuchin cords and of turbans.

The exhibition deliberately sets out to differ from previous celebrations of the events of 1683. Fifty years ago Dollfuss, the Christian-Social Chancellor, applauded the liberation of Vienna in terms of his corporative, authoritarian Catholicism, with which he opposed both Nazism and Bolshevism. Years later, in a National-Socialist commemorative bronze, the banner of the vanquished Turks bore not the Crescent but the Star of David. The Turks were simply identified with the enemy, which is to say the Jews, by means of a falsification which today, in the xenophobic attitudes towards the seasonal foreign workers, runs the risk of becoming tragically true. We do not want to be the Jews of tomorrow, says a picture by Akbar Behkalam in the Museum of the Twentieth Century, where there is an exhibition by Turkish artists devoted to present-day conditions in their country and among the emigrants.

The shadow of a new, if different, problem looms over

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relations between Turks and Europeans, especially Germans, and only the clearest awareness of the problem can prevent it taking on ruinous proportions. Repulsed 300 years ago, the Turks are now returning to Europe not with weapons but as a work-force, with all the tenacity of the *Gastarbeiter* (immigrant workers) who undergo poverty and humiliation but gradually put down roots in a land which they conquer by means of their humble toil. In many cities in Germany the schools are empty of German children and the classrooms are full of Turkish children; the West, which entrusts its decline to the fall in the birth-rate, is reacting with anxious intolerance to the results of a social mechanism of its own making. It may be that the moment is approaching when historical social and cultural differences will reveal, and violently, the difficulties of mutual compatibility. Our future will depend in part on our ability to prevent the priming of this time-bomb of hatred, and the possibility that new Battles of Vienna will transform brothers into foreigners and enemies.

HISTORY SHOWS that it is not only senseless and cruel, but also difficult to state who is a foreigner. Alessio Bombaci reminds us that in the 18th century the Turks themselves felt the word "Turk" to be an insult, and their history is one of a series of age-old struggles between diverse peoples, originating on the steppes of Central Asia, peoples who began to become aware of their own common identity only when the Ottoman Empire was almost on its deathbed. The first unitary name given to Turkey by the various and often mutually hostile peoples was the name of Rome, *mamālik-i-Rūm*, which indicated the Seljuk kingdom.

But all histories and all identities are composed of these differences, these pluralities, these exchanges and borrowings of diverse ethnic and cultural elements, which make each nation and individual the child of a regiment. The Habsburg eagle which halted the advance of the Great Turk spread its wings over almost as varied a multiplicity of races and cultures, and during the First World War, when the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires were allied, posters and the press in Austria sung the praises of this brotherhood-in-arms with their age-old enemies.

The meeting between Europe and the Ottoman Empire is the great example of two worlds which, while hacking each other to pieces, end by a gradual understanding, to their mutual enrichment. It is no coincidence that the greatest Western writer to recount the story of that meeting between two worlds, Ivo Andrič, is fascinated by the image of the bridge; it occurs time and time again in his novels and stories, symbolising a hard-won means of communication thrown across the barriers of raging torrents and deep ravines, of races and religions. It is a place where weapons clash, but where in the end, and little by little, enemies become united in a world that is as variegated yet unified as an epic fresco, as in the Balkan gorges Turkish soldiers and *haiduks*—the guerrilla-brigands who resisted them—came to resemble each other.

One of the first items in the exhibition is a splendid map of the first (1529) siege of Vienna, undertaken by Suleiman the Magnificent, the great Sultan who died at the siege of Szigetvár and whose death was kept secret for several days so as not to discourage his army. Messengers were led into the presence of his embalmed body seated motionless on his throne, listening to them without replying, the majesty of death disguised as regal impassiveness. The map of Vienna is surrounded by areas of blue, as if it were the whole world girdled, as for the ancients, by Ocean. The Turks thought of Vienna as "the city of the golden apple", the almost mythical aspect of the Empire which they had to conquer at all costs; the nomads of the steppes of Asia, the "wild asses" who despised every corrupting urban settlement, seemed to wish to possess, in Vienna, the City *par excellence,* their very opposite. The sultans who pressed on Vienna perhaps envisaged it as the capital of that universal "Roman-Muslim" Empire which, according to Jorga, the great Rumanian historian, they wished to found, even if Jalal un-Din Rumi, the Persian mystical poet, said that it was reserved for the Greeks to build and for the Turks to destroy.

Blood does not always pale and fade so soon, says a beautiful passage of Lu-Hsün, the great Chinese writer. In the Army Historical Museum the uniform of Francis Ferdinand, the Archduke assassinated at Sarajevo, shows bloodstains on the blue tunic, and ragged holes on the sleeve and one side of the chest—the left. Beside the uniform the hat with its huge green feathers is, on the other hand, unharmed and impressive. The wound inflicted on 28 June 1914 is still open, for the whole of Europe. It may be that it will have to be healed disastrously by a third and final catastrophe, because two world wars have not found a stable substitute for the equilibrium which was shaken at Sarajevo. Francis Ferdinand's menu, that June 28th, comprised *Consommé en tasse, Oeufs à la gelée, Fruits au beurre, Boeuf bouilli aux légumes, Poulets à la Villeroy; Riz Compote, Bombe à la Reine, Fromage, Fruits et Dessert.*

Those bloodstains remind us that nothing vanishes, that things exist, that no significant moment of our lives is ever shelved. My friends often tease me because in my mind the girls we were at school with are still beautiful and in their first youth, and time has no power over them or over my way of seeing them. I admit that injustice discriminates even between bloodstains: those of the Archduke are preserved under glass, while those of the 85 demonstrators killed by the police near the Palace of Justice on 15 July 1927 have been washed away by the rain and rubbed out by passing feet. But even those bloodstains exist, are with us for ever.

THE PRESENT Chamber of Workers and Employees used to be Eichmann's office and from here he directed the bureaucratic organisation of the racial policies of the Third Reich. At his trial Eichmann remembered his period in Vienna as "the happiest and most successful of my life". That work evidently cost him few embarrassments in the city which Grillparzer, the Austrian national poet, defined in the 19th century as "the Capua of the spirits" and which has always been mistress of the art of self-mystification. In the (certainly formal) referendum which took place in 1938 after the *Anschluss,* only 1,953 Viennese—according to Christian

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Reder in his alternative guidebook—voted against annexation to the Third Reich, even if suicides that year numbered 1,358, as compared with the annual average of 400.

One of those suicides, on 16 March 1938, threw himself out of one of these windows. He was Egon Friedell, conservative historian and critic, poet of the ephemeral and of the short comic tale, in which biting irony, reappraising all limitations, gives us a glimpse of infinity, of what eternally transcends our own smallness, making it all the dearer to us. That leap from the window was his last *Witz*, his joke at the expense of the *Gestapo* who were coming to arrest him. The front of the house is seedy, the stucco is peeling; a few wrought-iron balconies put up a pathetic pretence at being ornamental. Friedell was a Jew, and Nazism forced him to that window in the name of the purity of the Germanic race. The tenants of the building, we are told by the name-plates by the main door, are today called Pokorny, Pekarek, Kriczer and Urbanck. There is an old saying that every true Viennese is a Bohemian.

LIVE AND let live is the old Viennese attitude, a sort of easy-going tolerance that doesn't take much, as Alfred Polkar said, to become the cynical indifference of "die and let die". The early 19th-century *(biedermeier)* cemetery of Sankt Marx is in a state of total neglect. The iron ornaments on the tombs are being eaten away by rust, the inscriptions are becoming blurred: the adjective "unforgettable" applied to those names is being corroded into oblivion. It is a forest of headless angels, of tangled vegetation covering the sepulchres, stelae in the jungle. An angel holding her torch upside down, her hand raised thoughtfully to her elbow, indicates the spot where Mozart was buried; the chrysanthemums on this modest cenotaph are fresh.

Here are many Macedonian, Greek, Polish and Rumanian tombs: *"Ici est déposé Kloucerou Constantin Lensch fils du Chevalier Philippe Lensch Grand Legothet de Droit."* Like Harlequins, or like the Hans Wursts of so many Viennese popular comedies, the visitor to these autumnal avenues, in which oblivion seems to be in full flourish, is drawn by the thought of death to think of love. Not of *perditio* or *affectio,* but of *appetitio*—of bed, in short, and of certain playful, tender moments. This luxuriance of the perishable gives birth to loyalty, to memory, to a guerrilla war with time. I get a sudden urge to slip into the first telephone booth and, with a handful of *schillings* ready, ring up all those old girl-friends who have so imperiously got ahead in life. Luckily we now have automatic dialling.

MARIAHILFESTRASSE. In these rooms lived Uncle Otto, a great-uncle of mine on my mother's side. For decades the waves of history tossed him this way and that, but always ended, quite by chance, in carrying him upwards to safety. During the First World War he was in Trieste as the Austrian official in charge of supplies, an office which he carried out scrupulously, and which enabled him to get through those years of shortage without particular hardship. In 1918 the Italians arrived in Trieste, and he was summoned by General Petitti di Roreto. He got to the appointment slightly late, to find that a small crowd in the street outside had already beaten up his ex-colleague in the same job, yelling "Down with the Austrian starve-master", and its aggressive tendencies were already too thoroughly glutted to give him the same treatment. The general, struck by the neatness of his registers, asked him to be in charge of rations during that difficult transitional period and took him along to a box in the theatre, where they were celebrating the liberation of Trieste, and where the ovations and cries of "Long live Italy!" automatically rained down also on my great-uncle.

On the advent of Fascism he transferred to Vienna, where during the years of the great economic crisis his experience gained him a similar job. He told me that sometimes, before some demonstration, a number of Socialists would come to his office and inform him that the following day they would be demanding that he hand over 200 cwt of flour. He was bidden to say he was prepared to release 100, and in the end they would settle for 150. They then asked which of the rooms in his offices were least used, in case it became strictly necessary to throw stones at a few windows. Having retired from public life, during Nazism he protected a number of persecuted Socialists and Communists, and maybe for this reason in 1945, during the Russian Occupation, the Soviet authorities asked him to look after supplies and the distribution of foodstuffs. As an old man he was made a Knight of Malta, and by instinct turned down an important post which a short while later was involved in awkward squabbles. Having been created Knight Commander, he spent half the year in Rome, in the palace of the Order, along with an extremely ancient manservant whom he, though well into his eighties, helped to move and feed himself. "Come on, Giovanni, let's go to the mountains", he would say to him, and the pair of them would thereupon take deep breaths from an oxygen cylinder. He always glided through the midst of events like an expert dancer who does not brush against other couples on the crowded dance-floor.

"WHEN HE WAS HERE he had only a few visitors, but now everyone goes", says the taxi-driver who takes me to Freud's house and surgery at 19 Berggasse. The rooms are famous, and I myself have been here often, but every time they make a deep impression; in the very atmosphere one can feel the respect and paternal melancholy with which this 19th-century gentleman descended into the underworld. In the entrance we find his hat and stick, as if Freud had just come in; there is his medical bag, a travelling-trunk and a leather-covered bottle, the drinking-flask which he used to take with him on his trips into the woods, which he loved with the precise conventionality of a *paterfamilias.*

The photographs and documents that cram what was his actual study, portraits of Freud and of the other founders of the new science, and editions of celebrated works, are simply informative and rather banal: this is no longer Freud's study, but a didactic museum of psychoanalysis, practically

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reduced to the stereotyped formula that is by now *de rigueur* in every speech or paper.

But in the small waiting-room there are some books from Freud's real library: Heine, Schiller, Ibsen, the classics who taught him the prudence, the precision, the *humanitas* indispensable to any journey to the lower world. That walking-stick and flask tell us everything about the greatness of Freud, his sense of the measure of things and his love of order, his simplicity as a man resolved in himself and free of manias; one who, by plunging into the abysses of human ambivalences, both learns and teaches how to love those family outings in the mountains more, in greater freedom.

Of all this there is little left in the conferences of psychoanalysis: here haphazard salvos, ignorant of syntax, all too often degrade psychoanalysis into an unwitting parody of itself and apply the Oedipus complex to problems of refuse disposal or the monetary spiral. The true heirs of Freud are not the hot-air ideologists who make spectacular use of psychoanalysis as a chewing-gum, but the therapists who with infinite patience help some people to live a little more easily. That modest, reassuring leather bag makes me think of all those to whom I myself owe what little self-confidence I possess, that essential minimum of ability needed to live with the dark places of myself.

At the end of the Himmelstrasse, in a spot with a fine view of the Vienna woods, a monument erected in 1977 in the place called Bellevue states, not without rhetoric: "Here, on July 24th 1895, the secret of dreams revealed itself to Dr Sigm. Freud." It is droll to think of that Mr Secret who, like an impostor in a comedy, finally takes off the mask.

One prefers to think of that landscape, and of Freud looking at it, reading the curved outlines of the distant city like a map of man's inner meanderings, never entirely explored. What is touching in that rhetorical inscription is the "Dr", standing as it does for academic dignity, for demanding studies achieved not without some pride.

As THE plaque states, on the site of the present building at 15 Schwarzpanierstrasse, now guarded by an intractable concièrge who expels me instantly with sharp words, until 1904 there stood the house in which Beethoven died. In the same house, on the night of October 3rd-4th 1903, Weininger shot himself through the heart. A few weeks earlier he had described the feeling of bewilderment one feels on looking back along the road one has just walked, the indifferent street with its rectilinear length that speaks of the irreversibility of time. In the end this is all there is, the backward glance that perceives the nothingness of it all.

## Cartoon Time

Cartoon characters climb the walls
of the children's ward. Tom beats Jerry
with a frying-pan; Flintstones hurl rocks.
All violence falls short of bloodshed,
except for that which is promised him.
E.T. intones his mantra: "Home".

At the foot of his cot hangs Mr Mean
whose bubble reads, "Mr Mean says,
'No food or drink'." An hour to the operation.
The surgeon says there is no substitute
for looking. Donald Duck frets. Sister says
all signs are fair, to us who do not think to speak.

He sits on the anaesthetist's table
and does not notice that the walls are bare,
only the hanging masks, the snaking tubes.
He is tiny and watchful, alien there.
Outside we blindly read, reread the notices;
the surgery that rages in our heads is M.A.S.H.

Later, at the foot of his cot, we watch
the saline drip and fuss with sheets,
muddling over our vulnerability
upsetting as the frightened pulse of love.
Above, a can of spinach revives Popeye;
below, Bugs Bunny corks a shotgun with his thumb.

*Tony Roberts*

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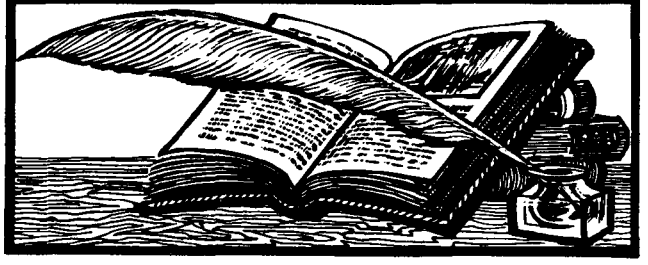
# COLUMN



GOING to see Mikhail Gorbachov at Guildhall a few weeks ago, I'd expected monster traffic jams. A British friend in Paris used to curse "the noxious potentates" whose motorcades disrupted the city, their outriders pushing drivers aside with imperious gauntleted gestures. Sirens wailing, they paid no heed to stop-lights and what my friend called "clouted passages" *(passages cloutés* or pedestrian crossings): the king, or sultan, or president or prime minister must get through. The result was chaos in the side-streets, and a drastic rise in the collective blood pressure at every fresh "embottlement" or *embouteillage.*

Not so in London, already locked in vehicular paralysis which is said to cost countless millions a year. Once inside the precincts of the city, however, the streets were remarkably empty, cleared no doubt by security men. Official guests had car labels as well as invitations, and policemen beckoned us briskly round the prescribed route. Gowned ushers pointed the way past stock-still pikemen in scarlet and gold who might have been waxwork dummies, but weren't; and fresh flowers helped to lighten an atmosphere which security measures might have weighed down.

I spotted a few heavy men with the stamp of professionals. Outside, it seems, Gorbachov's personal bodyguard wore long leather coats. The seat next but one to mine held a monoglot Russian in a grey sports jacket and a Lech Walesa moustache. *KGB*? Embassy? Press? There was no way of telling. But the occasion remained valiantly festive—partly assisted by the Ascot touch of the ladies' mandatory hats.

Introductions from the rostrum began with the time-honoured litany of "My Lords, Ladies, Your Excellencies. . . ." and so on, but included "Mr First Secretary", later commuted to another "Excellency". Amid the medieval splendour, Mr Gorbachov was in no way incongruous. Eastern Emperors had come this way before. His suit was no Khrushchev elephant outfit, but trim and well cut. He looked surprisingly like his photographs—not a characteristic of all politicians, or actors, or performers generally.

His performance was unexceptional. President Reagan, on the same platform last year, had charmed us all by expressing relief at speaking in a building older than he was. There were no such wisecracks this time. Like the President, the First Secretary read his speech off a transparent autocue; but he lacked Hollywood nonchalance, and gabbled towards the end. Would he be late for luncheon with the Queen? That seemed to be his unspoken worry when he looked at his watch.

Mrs Thatcher, who followed, had her usual air of being delighted to open this fête. Beaming keenly through the autocue screen, she was band-box radiant and disarmingly thrilled. The text of her speech, prepared beforehand, bore little relation to Mr Gorbachov's: it was rather like a game of "Consequences" in which the players don't know till the end what the others have written. But it was notable that the scourge of Brussels "bureaucracy" and champion of *l'Europe des patries* made a point of mentioning the European Community, which Mr Gorbachov had not.

The main substance of the speeches, as reporters agreed, was far from novel. Mr Gorbachov divulged that he had enough enriched uranium, and warned the West that modernising tactical nuclear weapons might cause trouble in East-West talks. But the logic of his remarks seemed more interesting than their specifics. What he was saying, essentially, was that *détente* and disarmament were linked in his mind with economic prosperity and environmental improvements: *en clair,* that the Soviet Union can't afford a really intense Cold War. Nothing surprising in that, you may say: the *KGB* think-tanks have been making the same point for years. What was new, for most of the Guildhall audience, was that Mr Gorbachov was saying so, in coded fashion but in public, and to probably the hardest-nosed leader in the West. Coupled with elections back home—elections!—and signs of change in at least two of the Eastern satellites, this made it hard not to feel that a new epoch may be precariously at hand.

Mrs Thatcher obviously thought so. Having declared long before that with Mr Gorbachov one might perhaps do business, she repeated the essence of all wary wisdom since at least Theodore Roosevelt: speak softly and carry a big stick. She tended to lecture the guest a little about the virtues of democracy, like a matron urging marriage on a spinster; and she clearly delighted in comparing *perestroika* with her own would-be "bonfire of controls"—to borrow a phrase from Harold Wilson in 1948. But the heart of her message was profoundly orthodox. We welcome *perestroika* and *glasnost*; we wish Mr Gorbachov every success in his experiment; we too seek *détente* and disarmament; but we must "keep up our guard".

You will learn little more from most of the Western publications that have lately responded to what one of them calls "the Gorbachev phenomenon". As its author remarks:

> ". . . a very different political game is in the making and is already, to some extent, practiced. Authoritarian coercion, once a favored tool, would no longer be of much use. Instead internal politics is learning to use a new language: interplay and bargaining, yielding and conforming, pressuring and compromising, giving and taking. In brief, real politics, negotiations among groups and classes that are coming into their own as autonomous partners in the new game. It is a new authoritarianism of a quite different type, still *à la russe,* but after all, most regimes in history have been authoritarian."[1]

[1] *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation.* By MOSHE LEWIN. Hutchinson Radius, £5.95.



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Another author, Marshall I. Goldman, revising an earlier study, thinks that

> ". . . Gorbachev has two problems. On the one hand, he is reforming too fast. . . . On the other hand, he is not moving fast enough. He has to be able to show, and quickly, that his reforms are working; that all this tumult will bear fruit and soon. . . .
>
> It is hard to see how he can achieve the economic modernisation and power he wants without sacrificing some current political and military power."[2]

Dev Murarka, an Indian journalist living in Moscow, takes a more comprehensive, idealistic view of Gorbachov's policies, notably in the international field.

> "Undoubtedly, the programme is too elaborate, and unrealizeable. That is not the point. The essence of the matter is not in its shape but in its message which is twofold:
>
> 1. The nuclear age has made all elaborate arms stockpiling fatally dangerous as well as redundant. . . .
>
> 2. We must create a new economic world order, in which economic interests of all countries are equally protected, a just way is found to end the debt burden, and more funds are released for development purposes, particularly funds saved from the arms race. . . .
>
> It is remarkable how near the Gorbachov approach is to some of the thinkers and leaders of the Third World as well as the Western neutrals, and this is one of the hidden appeals of the Gorbachov approach which has so alarmed the Western establishment."[3]

Dev Murarka's rather naive assessment is usefully corrected in a very astute collection of essays by US and Japanese experts. Its Introduction sets the tone—friendly but sceptical, sympathetic but firm.

> "The evidence seems pretty clear that Gorbachev intended his reforms not to be primarily a public relations stunt, for all the media ballyhoo about them, but rather, a means to preserving the status of the USSR as a world power into the 21st century. . . .
>
> Forces favoring reform include Gorbachev's leadership, . . . frustration with stagnation and demoralization under Brezhnev, . . . a loose cluster or reform movement of academics, journalists, and Party officials . . . and Gorbachev's ideological revision of the socialist model. . . .
>
> Obstacles confronting reform reflect remnants of Stalin's legacy. They add up to, first, a disharmony of interests between reformers, on the one hand, and the bureaucratic apparatus and some working people and national minorities, on the other; second, the absence of a rallying appeal and common belief. . . .
>
> Obstacles in the form of contradictions within the reforms relate mainly to Lenin's legacy. The contradictions have begun to show up in signs of possible conflict between Lenin's legacy of centralized rule by one vanguard Communist Party and the nature of economic and political reform. . . .
>
> Prospects for reform depend on the outcome of the present, crucial first phase of implementing the shift from an administrative to a limited market economy lasting into the 1990s."[4]

External policy, as the symposium's authors point out, is an essential complement to internal change. From the West, it will require "careful . . . diplomacy".

> "Between skeptical realism (still willing to negotiate) and roseate optimism lies the cautiously positive view that the total dynamic of reform may well cement irreversible ties and dependencies between the Soviet Union and the West. . . .
>
> An international, Soviet-Western harmony of interests in Soviet reform exists, as long as it remains a liberating reform, not a re-Stalinizing one, and as long as Western security concerns are safeguarded."

In other words, Mrs Thatcher's Guildhall speech. But while there is a general agreement on such broad principles, there remain both a number of dangers and a series of policy options to be explored.

THE MOST obvious danger is that Mr Gorbachov might be overthrown. This would probably be tougher on the Soviet people than on the West. Provided that NATO had not lowered its guard, let its tactical nuclear weapons grow obsolescent, or allowed the conventional imbalance to increase, we might simply be back at square one, but with some chastened looks on the faces of naive unilateralists. This is not to deny that it would be a costly tragedy: but at least we should know where we stood.

A second danger is that which loomed at Reykjavik, when the USA and the USSR looked like doing a deal over Europe's head. That didn't finally happen—and the chances are that Europe's reactions at the time have precluded any such deal from now on. But a milder version of the same thing would be increased American reluctance, in the Gorbachov climate, to continue bearing so much of the burden of Europe's defence. If it looked as though the Soviet threat no longer existed, or could be effectively discounted, American pressure for more equal burden-sharing, or even for US troop withdrawals, would be far harder for Europeans to resist. If that left them relatively defenceless, they would no doubt grow unduly attentive to nods, winks, hints, pressure, and veiled threats from Moscow, drifting insensibly towards the Soviet sphere of influence, however independent they formally remained.

The most immediate danger is a specific instance of this sinister scenario. Its target is obviously Germany. Despite more than 40 years of division, many Germans in East and West still hanker after some form of reunification—as well

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[2] *Gorbachev's Challenge: Economic Reform in the Age of High Technology*. By MARSHALL I. GOLDMAN. W. W. Norton, $7.95; £5.25.

[3] *Gorbachov: The Limits of Power*. By DEV MURARKA. Hutchinson, £16.95.

[4] *Gorbachev's Reforms: U.S. and Japanese Assessments*. Edited by PETER JUVILER and HIROSHI KIMURA. Walter de Gruyter, DM84, paper DM38.

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they might. If Mr Gorbachov's ill-defined "common European home" were to promise what Soviet policy has always denied the Germans, and Western statesmanship has never delivered, how long would they hesitate before trying to come to some kind of terms? If they did—and even before they did—would the European Community and NATO be able to bear the strain?

These are serious questions, and they need to be faced before they arise. What alternatives can the West offer? What safeguards? In the last resort, what emergency plan? More fundamentally, should we—as some are already suggesting—rethink the whole Western strategy of European unity and Atlantic partnership that has evolved since World War II?

This surely would be disastrous. Happily, not even the Soviet Union seems to envisage it; and those in the West who call for it are the unreconstructed simpletons of yore.

NEVERTHELESS. *perestroika* surely demands a positive response. Should we, as some advocate, offer a "Marshall Plan" to Mr Gorbachov, to help supply some of the consumer goods his citizens angrily demand? Would such a gesture be misunderstood, or give weapons to his enemies? Might it actually defer disarmament, by lessening economic pressure on the budget for Soviet defence?

Should the European Community, as distinct from the Atlantic Alliance, itself make special overtures to the USSR? If so, what role should the US play, as observers or participants? Should the Europeans, to forestall American troop withdrawals, themselves revive the project of a European Defence Community, centred no doubt on Western European Union (WEU)? If they did, would this provoke ructions in Moscow—or in Washington? How could the superpowers be severally appeased?

These too are serious questions; and any signs of their being explored as yet are few and far between. Meanwhile, the future rushes towards us, as fast and bewildering as the darkness beyond our headlights or an express highway at night.

That road analogy is not fortuitous. Negotiating London's clogged streets on the way to Guildhall, I cursed not "the noxious potentate" but the lack of foresight that had caused our traffic problems. We had multiple choices, all ignored. A draconian ban on private cars in cities; a fine, or a wait, for those carrying only one person; a total ban on parking; a graded system of road pricing, with astronomic tolls on urban streets. Too authoritarian? Try, then, massive subsidies for urban public transport; decentralising industry; telecommuting on a large scale. But thinking ahead is too difficult, and forecasts are always wrong. So we end up with double yellow lines, traffic wardens, clamps, the impounding of vehicles, and endless nugatory road "improvement" schemes. Our last resort may yet be to do nothing, and let the snarl-ups happen—until gradually drivers desist from using their cars.

Could such benign neglect solve all our problems? On the roads, it just might. As a response to *perestroika,* it would be dangerous driving, to say the least.

*M*

## House Lizards

In these tropical homes, they are many.
But they keep mostly to themselves and eat only
those insects who gratefully offer themselves.

They are believed to be right, always.
When we differ on a point, from behind
the piles of old newspapers would come the words:

*True, true.*

During a crisis in thought, when
everything is bound into a knot
that wouldn't open despite our best efforts,

or when, at the lean end
of an imagining hour, we find ourselves
farther from where we are, we'd hear:

*True, true.*

Reptilian group. Cream-white and smoke-grey.
Harmless. Preservers of ancient memories.
Our wise forefathers in enviable disguise.

*Bibhu Padhi*

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# *Vernon Scannell*

## The Party's Over

*A Kind of Elegy*

Some years ago—forty or so, I'd guess—
Among the literati of the day
It was fashionable to praise the pure *simplesse*
Of the artist's eye, and you would hear them say
In The Fitzroy or Wheatsheaf, or write in some Review,
How the painter or poet with his innocent eye
Perceived a world rinsed by primeval dew,
And marvelled like a child. Maybe. But I
Was never quite convinced although I knew
Of poets, painters and composers who,
Outside the practice of their art, would be
Judged as, if not "childlike", "immature".
One, a poet, died quite recently,
Whose bloodshot vision no one would call "pure",
And yet he wrote with passion and some wit
And made his own bleak music from despair,
Snarling at life, as if he hated it,
Those obloquies a kind of putrid prayer.
His last appearance, just before he died
Was at a party given by a friend
Whom he had known for years, and there he tried
To squeeze more from the night than it contained,
Growing more excited with each drink
Frantic for affection and applause.
The less indulgent guests would purse and shrink,
And even his kind host was seen to pause
Before responding to appeals for more
Booze, and love, and flattery.
At length
The first departing guests moved to the door;
Soon others followed, sensing that the strength
Which welded this occasion's symmetry
Had suddenly begun to leak away.
"The party's over", someone said; but he,
The ageing poet, was resolved to stay:
"The party isn't over! Mustn't be!"
Indignation and entreaty brimmed his eyes;
His look was like a child's of two or three,
Grey hair and ravaged face, a slipped disguise.
"It isn't over yet!" he cried again,
"Oh yes it is", they said, and made him go
Out into the night of grown-up men
Who laugh, and wave, and slam car-doors and know
The safe road home.
Last seen, the poet stood
Blanched and isolated in the chill
Blaze of headlamps, as if carved in wood,
Almost like a winter tree, until
The silver glitter of his piss began,
Rose arching from his centre to descend
On unaffronted hollyhocks and on
A world where all the parties had to end.

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# Bobbie

"We used to drink Green Goddesses", she said.
"I don't suppose you even know the name.
At least you've heard of Pimm's. He had a red
MG, my boyfriend did. We'd go to Thame
And stay at Fothergill's pub, the famous one,
Or else nip down to somewhere by the sea
And spend the day just idling in the sun.
And when the long and lovely night began
We'd leave the bar and go outside where we,
And maybe one or two new chums, would dance
There on the esplanade to music from
A gipsy barrel-organ. Such romance
You can't believe, and all along the prom
Coloured lanterns glowed like fairyland.
We'd dance and dance, my dear, and all the time
You'd smell the seaside smell of sea and sand
Behind the lilac, honeysuckle, lime
And *Passing Clouds*, and there, below the sound
Of tango, waltz and foxtrot, you could hear
The hush and sigh of breakers on the strand
And suck and gurgle underneath the pier.
Things were different then, sheer poetry dear;
Such gorgeous lingerie we used to wear.
My boy friends, every one a gentleman;
You'd never hear one raise his voice or swear,
Not like today. Oh, things were different then.
My escort never came without some flowers
And chocolate liqueurs, nice things like that.
They were the days of sunshine and sweet showers,
The dancing days of silver saxophones
And roses.

Well, thank you for our chat
And for the drinkie too. It's time to go."
The lipstick marking where her mouth had been
Curved slightly upward at each end although
Her eyes remained unchanged, glass splinters, green,
Like Christmas-cracker jewellery, the gleam
Not quite derisive, watchful, undeceived,
Not asking to be wanted, but believed.

# War Casualty, Mental Ward

Something has gone wrong inside my head.
The sappers have left mines and wire behind.
I hold long conversations with the dead.

I do not always know what has been said;
The rhythms, not the words, stay in my mind;
Something has gone wrong inside my head.

Not just the sky, but grass and trees are red,
The flares and tracers—or I'm colour-blind;
I hold long conversations with the dead.

Their presence comforts and sustains like bread;
When they don't come it's hard to be resigned;
Something has gone wrong inside my head.

They know about the snipers that I dread,
And how the world is booby-trapped and mined;
I hold long conversations with the dead.

As all eyes close they gather round my bed
And whisper consolation. When I find
Something has gone wrong inside my head
I hold long conversations with the dead.

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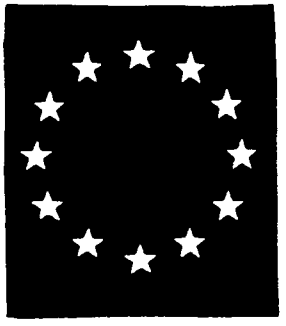
# First Statesman of Interdependence?

## *On Jean Monnet—By François Duchêne*



CHARACTERISTICALLY, the centenary of the birth of Jean Monnet passed more or less unnoticed in Britain. Not so on the Continent. On 9 November 1988, his ashes were conveyed to the Panthéon in Paris—the equivalent of beatification by republican France. Germany and France, and five other states of the Community (not Britain), produced identical commemorative stamps featuring a not particularly successful portrait. Ironically, a mere four months before, France and Germany had already produced common stamps, this time with the effigies of Adenauer and de Gaulle, to mark the 25th anniversary of the Franco-German friendship treaty of 1963. Not long since, this near-juxtaposition of the symbol of a federal Europe with the champion of the Europe of states would have seemed incongruous, if not an outrage. It says a great deal for the changes in outlook of the past decade that this passed virtually unnoticed.—"Europe" is now presumably not so much an ideal as a fact of life.

Monnet in his day was credited with an exceptionally astute instinct for timing. A superstitious man, he would probably have been more flattered to be told he was lucky. Anyhow—luck or instinct—he seems to have preserved his sense of timing beyond the grave, for his centenary came at a time when Franco-German relations, and with them (indeed because of them) prospects for the European Community, were moving on a rising tide. Since early 1988 the goal of full economic union by 1992 has been taken very seriously indeed.

The economic reasons are obvious enough. At a time when new world oligopolies are being formed, European industry has at last woken up to the dangers of trying to compete with the Japanese (and to a lesser extent the Americans) from the inadequate market bases provided by individual national economies.

The political reasons are equally powerful, though possibly not quite so obvious. Gorbachov in Moscow has created a new phase of mobility. Whenever East-West cooperation is in the air and with it Germany's hopes for its own good relations with the East, the Bonn government feels a need to reassure its Western allies. It can hardly strengthen ties with the United States, because the security relationship is about as strong as it could be, and the disparities between the superpower and a truncated Germany too great. It can, however, strengthen relations with France, which in practice means strengthening the European Community. Just as Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* was accompanied by one of several European *relances*—the one which led to British entry into the Community—the current opening to the East coincides both with Helmut Kohl's determined efforts to strengthen the Single European Act and with the opening of the first joint French-Germany Embassy (in Soviet-controlled Mongolia). On their side, the French are acutely aware that whenever Moscow speaks of a European policy, what it means first and foremost is bilateral relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. This fear always signals a renewed French zeal for Europe.

Timing is also relevant in a different sense. The cleavage between Gaullist and pre-Gaullist France has become more and more blurred. François Mitterrand, one of the sempiternal ministers of the Fourth Republic and now apparently a semi-eternal President under the Fifth, is the living proof. In originally suggesting that the remains of Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet be transferred to the Panthéon (Schuman's heirs demurred, apparently for fear of detracting from the museum at Schuman's home in Lorraine),Mitterrand was in effect transferring the credit for "Europe" from de Gaulle—who had tended to appropriate it by the propaganda around his relationship with Adenauer—back to the real founders of the European policy, deep inside the Fourth Republic in 1950.

THE FOURTH REPUBLIC, which lasted from 1946-1958, has always had a bad press in France—and not only because of misleading Gaullist propaganda. Frenchmen who are old enough—they are fewer than they were—do not care to be reminded of post-War poverty and complexes, the weakness of governments, colonial wars which turned into crises that threatened the régime and democracy itself. . . . The result has been an amnesia which draws a blanket over the Fourth Republic—warts, best features, and all.

Yet this is a great error of memory. Dean Acheson found little favour in official London when he wrote that Britain had lost an empire and failed to find a role. France also lost an empire, but did find a post-War role. De Gaulle's stabili-



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sation of the economy and institutions certainly must take some of the credit for this. But if he added the necessary roof to the edifice, he also tried to obscure the fact that the Fourth Republic had laid the foundations for him. The first modernisation plan after the War, whatever criticisms can be levelled at it, did incite the French mandarinate to channel great-power attitudes of mind into more realistic and solid ambitions for economic success, while the launching of European integration extended this abroad by providing a new frontier in foreign policy. In both cases, it was the despised Fourth Republic which rejuvenated the country.

All this is of direct relevance to the centenary of Jean Monnet. For this man—who was neither a politician nor a civil servant, and who said of himself that he had never had a job he did not invent—was at the centre of both innovations. It is not too much to say that Monnet was the major strategist and statesman of the Fourth Republic, the one who more than any other determined the crucial choices. In pointing back to this figure, Mitterrand has in effect reminded his countrymen of the positive legacy of the Fourth Republic.

## *The Power of Ideas*

IT MAY SEEM paradoxical that such significance can attach to a man who was never elected to anything, who never sat in a representative government. Indeed, without the two World Wars, Monnet's public career would be more or less unthinkable. A salesman of the family brandy before 1914, and an international investment banker between the Wars, he was drawn into public service by war alone. Had the French civil service not been shaken to the foundations by the Nazi Occupation, it is hard to see him proposing and undertaking the modernisation plan in 1945, and still less making a success of it: a centralised system would only be likely to tolerate an outsider in totally exceptional circumstances. And without the Monnet Plan, which made him the still point in the turning post-War world of ministerial musical chairs, he could hardly have launched the Schuman Plan in 1950.

Monnet's reputation is that of an *éminence grise.* Certainly, he had long proved himself a virtuoso in bureaucratic politics, and that proved to be the hidden strength in his later political career. He is also sometimes said to have been always something of a travelling salesman, and it is true that he believed in "the power of simple ideas simply expressed and repeated in the same unchanging fashion". On the other hand, one had only to see how long it took him to polish these so-called simplicities, to realise that they were scarcely naive or unselected. He had left school at sixteen. He did not rely much on books. He quite easily got lost with figures. He expressed himself in concentrated insights and ideas arising from his personal experience rather than in really systematic thinking. Nevertheless, his comments often opened up depths which one rarely encounters in the conversation of politicians; his judgment in confused situations and his intuitive insights overawed colleagues far more educated than he. "He barely had his *certificat d'études,* but he dominated the lot of us", Paul Delouvrier says, looking back on the Monnet Plan.[1]

There is a famous photograph of Cézanne, taken two years before his death, in front of one of his canvases of bathers. Small and squat, dressed in a long black overall, he is seated rather heavily, and looks the camera straight in the eye. A banker's son and well-off, he looks like an old peasant, with eyes half-closed and ringed by wrinkles. One often finds a whiff of the soil in images of the great men of the Third Republic—a Clemenceau, a Foch, a Claudel, and many others. Monnet was born in Cognac in 1888; even when dressed in (well-worn) Savile Row clothes, he gave off a strong but indefinable sense of the rural France of his youth. From time to time, he seemed to those who met him "almost Chinese", an inscrutable, shrewd old man suggestive of some kind of sixth sense. Receiving a visitor bent on talking art, Cézanne interrupted abruptly: "*Travaillons!* (Let's get to work!)" That is the tone Monnet would use after a few general exchanges at table, and for the same reason: the task in hand.

Friends were made through work. They might come from any quarter and any country; and he often worked at the lunch table, though he ate little himself. Etienne Hirsch has emphasised the vital importance of meals (rather spartan, though relieved by the family cognac and Havana cigars) in the working-out of the Monnet and Schuman Plans. But Monnet took no part in the cocktail round of politics, and shunned conferences as a waste of time. Edgar Faure, the epitome of the Paris political world, lived below Monnet's office for much of the twenty years during which Monnet's Action Committee for the United States of Europe operated from 83 Avenue Foch. They met in the hall or in the lift; they promised to see more of one another; they never did. Monnet was provincial and international; he was neither Parisian nor a mandarin.[2]

AS PIERRE URI has said, "Monnet was a creator, not an administrator"; or rather, he soon tired of administration. He was proud that the *Commissariat Général du Plan* (the central French economic planning administration) had only 100 staff, including the cleaners and chauffeurs; to him this was a badge of effectiveness. He would have liked the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community to be almost as small. He was appalled by the efforts of Walter Hallstein, first President of the European Commission (who believed that the backbone of the State was bureaucracy), to build up a staff comparable to that of national ministries.[3] Monnet treated his bureaucracies almost like a private staff, and expected them to swing like weathercocks to every tactical twist and turn. Generally speaking, he was indifferent to hierarchies, and had an apparently effortless way of by-passing them which

[1] Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris, 1976), p. 387; Paul Delouvrier, interview with the author, 5 May 1988.

[2] Etienne Hirsch, *Ainsi Va la Vie* (Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Lausanne, 1988), p. 91; Jacques Van Helmont, interview with the author, 1986.

[3] Pierre Uri, interview with the author, 9 April 1986; Berndt von Staden, interview with the author, 30 April 1987.

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astonished his American contacts almost as much as the Europeans.

Monnet paid attention only to those who could influence the decisions that concerned him. He would take up anyone—of whatever nationality, age or job—who could at a given moment be useful to him or stimulate his imagination. For years he had unrivalled networks, involving all the top political leaders in the countries of the European Community, the United States, and to a lesser degree Britain. He exploited them with wary restraint. One of his basic principles was never to compete with politicians, above all for glory. He preferred to lay siege to the powerful by working with their favourite counsellors, whom he was able to detect and sniff out in the most obscure back rooms, and with them to prepare the decisions for their masters.

There was nothing underhand about this. It was quite in the open, as far as the masters were concerned. Of course, they had basically to assent to the process if it was to work at all. But if they did, it was quite simply more effective and sure-footed to work through their helpers as much as with them. Although Monnet always exercised his talents in the collective worlds of politics and administration, and wholeheartedly embraced their disciplines, he had in him a strong strand of individualism.

All this produced rather ambiguous attitudes to the state. On the one hand, institutions "are the real pillars of civilisation":

> "I have long been impressed by a comment of the Swiss philosopher, Amiel: 'The experience of each individual is a new beginning. Only institutions grow wiser; they store up the collective experience and, from this experience and wisdom, men subject to the same laws will gradually find, not that their natures change but that their behaviour does.'"

On the other hand, there is an essential difference between the outlooks of de Gaulle and Monnet on the state.

> "The defeat and impotence of the French State through which he had lived were the absolute evil for de Gaulle, and this never left him. But the worst for Monnet was the recurrence of war and its cause: the desire for power of nation states reined in neither by rules nor by common institutions."

"We are not trying to produce a coalition of states. We are uniting men."[4] Far too practical to rail against the state, Monnet had, deep down, a considerable suspicion of it—typical of what the French in the 19th century called "the republican attitude".

To make a success of a career pursued in this manner on the margins of the usual highways of power demands quite exceptional qualities. Robert Marjolin, whose view of Monnet stood firmly this side idolatry, and who for years deeply resented Monnet's lack of initial commitment to the Common Market in general, has sketched a brief but penetrating portrait:

> "He was a man who believed in the power of ideas and in whom ideas in fact took on very great force. . . . It was his exceptional ability to conceive original ideas, or ones to which he at least gave the appearance of originality, combined with an extraordinary talent for putting them into effect, which in the last resort accounted for the fascination Jean Monnet exerted on a considerable number of people coming from the most varied backgrounds. I have never met anyone with anything like his persuasive powers."[5]

It was this idiosyncratic fusion of the two separate abilities to conceive creative ideas and to carry them through which ultimately explains Monnet's otherwise surprising talent for "inspiring" grand policy without usually having a conventional base from which to do so.

## *A Style for Europe*

In 1950, French foreign policy was in crisis. The division of Europe, and the birth of the German Federal Republic—both of them rooted in the Cold War—had produced basic contradictions. The new Federal Republic had to be anchored firmly in the West to prevent it playing renewed balancing acts between East and West. It also had to be made prosperous in order to generate the economic growth basic to Western European stability. But the more Germany became the protégé of the United States, the more it fuelled France's sense of insecurity. French government was badly placed to resolve this dilemma. The economic ministries were incapable of making serious proposals for customs unions, in the style of the European unity schemes put forward in preceding years, because of the protectionism of virtually all the manufacturing industries and agriculture. The French Foreign Office was too much wedded to the policy of holding down Germany to embrace any alternative to it. The relations of the Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, with a number of the senior diplomats who regarded him as far too germanophile if not germanic, were mutually mistrustful.

Monnet was not bogged down in this way: he had far more room for manoeuvre. He was not involved in the struggle for office, nor hampered by passive resistance in the Civil Service. As a result of his wartime activities in Washington, and his world-wide banking contacts before the War, he had incomparable networks in the USA and a self-confidence in dealing with Americans that no other Frenchman was near to possessing. He was also less constrained by the widespread French inferiority complex to-

[4] Jean Monnet, *Les Etats Unis d'Europe ont Commencé* (Paris, 1955), pp 36-37; Jacques Van Helmont, *Options Européennes 1945-1985*. (Commission des Communautés Européennes, 1986), p. 76.

[5] Robert Marjolin, *Le Travail d'une Vie* (Paris, 1986), p. 175.

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wards Germany. And he had acquired, through his experience of the two World Wars and his time at the League of Nations, where he was appointed Deputy Secretary-General in 1919 at the age of 31, a passionate conviction that it was absolutely necessary to overcome the conflicts bred by nationalism. At least two people have testified, and one document confirms, that Monnet had some form (in fact an impractical form) of the Schuman Plan in mind certainly by 1943, and probably as early as 1941.[6] Proposing a European way out of the crisis in French policy—which was exceedingly difficult for the regular officers of state —was in his case easy and natural.

It is a sign of Monnet's originality that in general the ideas of the Monnet and Schuman Plans were fairly widespread at the time they were launched, but that in each case it was Monnet alone who achieved them. The reason was that he approached these plans in ways that were strikingly different from those who seemed to be moved by the same preoccupations. The Monnet Plan, for instance, was an object-lesson in the advantage of avoiding conventional wisdom.

IT IS NOT even clear that Monnet was really a planner. Planning was in the air in Paris at the Liberation, but Monnet was little there. He was in Washington obtaining dollars for French reconstruction. The issue that led him to conceive the *Plan de Modernisation* seems to have been very specific: the shortage of dollars, the need to draw up priorities to make the best use of those which were to hand, and the preparation of a convincing case for borrowing more.

Insight and independence of judgment can be seen particularly in the delicate balances engineered with the powerful French bureaucracy, which was all too ready to reject an intruder. One reason why the Commissariat Général du Plan was a tiny body was in order not to compete with the ministries. On the other hand, Monnet threatened several times to resign, in order to make sure that he was responsible only to the Prime Minister; he was determined to avoid ministerial tutelage. Potentially, the most dangeorus relationship was with the powerful Finance Ministry. Monnet was exceptionally close to most of the successive Finance Ministers, but it appears that he did not try seriously to encroach on that Ministry's domain.

When Paul Delouvrier, then Finance Director of the Commissariat, did try to seize formal control of Marshall Aid's counterpart funds Monnet did not (as Delouvrier remembers) commit himself. The deal reached was that the Finance Ministry should take the decision on credits, but that the Commissariat should propose them. Delouvrier believes that—since René Mayer, a close associate of Monnet's, was Minister of Finance at the time (and Delouvrier was soon to become his *directeur de cabinet*)—Monnet could have won the short-term bureaucratic battle.[7] In the event, the real strength of the Commissariat was that its recommendations were usually far more fully analysed and coherent than the dossiers of the ministries. In addition, many of the brightest and youngest Finance Ministry officials sat in on the Commissariat's modernisation committees, and tended to act as advocates of their conclusions.

THE SAME EMPIRICISM can be detected in Monnet's outlook on the European Communities. It may seem a paradox for the prophet of supranationality, but it seems to be true that Monnet was never a committed federalist. The references to a European federation in the Schuman Declaration of 1950 seem to have been proposed by his close colleague and successor at the Commissariat du Plan, Etienne Hirsch.[8] Not that Monnet was against it: after all, the term is in the Declaration. Later on, the very title of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe hoisted the flag. But so long as the goal was not sufficiently close for it to be clear to Monnet how he could achieve it, he refused to speculate. There was a vague target: "Europe". He was careful not to define it, and did not lend an ear to those who thought they could. What mattered, in his eyes, was the next step. That was concrete. On its success all subsequent steps would depend.

He put his trust in the transforming effects of plans conceived in the general direction of the desired goal but deliberately designed to meet immediate needs. The Schuman Declaration says it succinctly:

> "Europe will not be raised at one stroke nor as an overall design: it will be arrived at by concrete achievements which create a prior community of commitment [*solidarité de fait*]."

In the phrase he often used, it was necessary to "change the context" in order to unbalance the status quo and thereby transform the calculations of the states. This would pave the way for the next step, and so on down the line. Europe would not be a constitutional grand design drawn up from the outset but the outcome of successive achievements cumulatively reinforcing one another. (Monnet had great confidence in his capacity to master events as they arose.)

MONNET'S APPROACH, not being constitutional, was primarily psychological. He lays it down as a principle in his *Mémoires* that it is not friendship which creates community, but the other way round: tasks that have to be carried out in common generate friendship. The task, in the case of the Schuman Plan, was to create a common market for coal and steel. That laid the material base for a system better able to match the continental scale of resources and organisation of the superpowers. On this material base, it was possible and necessary to design

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[6] The document is the record of the conversation held (on Sunday, 17 October 1943) in Algiers, with de Gaulle, René Mayer, Hervé Alphand and others, which has been published in Henri Rieben, *Des Guerres Européennes à l'Union de l'Europe* (Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Lausanne, 1987), pp. 286-291. The personal memories are those of Paul-Henri Spaak, *Combats Inachevés*, Vol. II (Paris, 1969), p. 38, and Etienne Hirsch, *Ainsi Va La Vie*, pp. 78-79.

[7] Paul Delouvrier, interview with author, 5 May 1988.

[8] Etienne Hirsch, interview with author, 22 September 1987.

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superstructures in such a way that community of feeling would follow.

The point of departure of this system is equality of rights between the partners. Monnet in the *Mémoires* says that equality is as important among nations as between individuals. For obvious reasons, it was this that won the enthusiastic assent of Konrad Adenauer as soon as the Schuman Plan was put to him. It was Monnet's basic strategy for integrating the Federal Republic in a solid Europe. He held to this principle through all the political ups-and-downs of integration. It was also the point where he parted company most often from French official policy. French policy often wanted to leave France room for privilege where she could get it: for instance, the nuclear deterrent decided by the governments of the Fourth Republic. French policy also tried, under de Gaulle, to use the European Community in order to revert, at least in part, to the policy of trying to manipulate Germany or to hold her down. It was only when French governments feared they might lose control of events that they switched back to the Community route, as they have done in the 1980s.

To be effective, equality implied three implementing precepts: *(1)* the establishment of an institution able to propose policies in the light of the general interest of the new Community; *(2)* non-discrimination between the member states; and *(3)* the joint acceptance of responsibility for the effects on each member of the policies chosen.

Drawing on his abundant experience of wartime alliances and the League of Nations, Monnet was convinced of the inability of national negotiators in international bodies to define the general interest. Their responsibilities towards purely national electorates compelled them to think in terms of national advantage. It was not, for them, a question of solving the problem common to all the parties in a negotiation, but of insuring against the dangers of relative loss. The only way to overcome this obstacle was to establish a body whose prime responsibility was precisely to state the general problem, and to propose policies arising from it. Of course it was also necessary to see that these policies were not vetoed by the member states. National vetoes had to be limited in some way—however partial.

FORMULATING POLICY in terms of the general interest cannot stop here. The legitimacy of any political system rests on two further principles.

The first is that inequalities of power between the partners must be restrained by rules that are generally accepted as equitable and that apply to all. The notion of non-discrimination between member states became so much the rule of play in Luxembourg at the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community, presided over by Monnet from 1952 to 1955, that one of his colleagues—a Belgian, Albert Coppé—took it as the symbol of his whole approach. One aim in particular was to prevent a repetition of the power-play characteristic of the pre-War industrial cartels.

The second principle—without which no state could delegate part of its powers to joint institutions—was the common responsibility of the Community for dealing with the effects on each participant of decisions taken in the name of all. The price of the advantage gained for the whole is recognition of the more serious possible losses for some of the parts.

These principles, put into practice (on the whole) in a convincing manner in the first European Community for Coal and Steel, arising from the Schuman Declaration, can seem much like classic federalism. The fact is that the traditional federations—such as Switzerland, the United Provinces of the Netherlands, or the United States—did not express themselves in these terms. Even in their embryonic forms, they offered the outlines of complete political systems. Born of revolts against tutelary powers (the Habsburgs, Spain, and Britain), they started life operating from the classic bastions of sovereignty: war and foreign affairs.

EUROPE'S SITUATION is quite different. It is handicapped in these central fields of political power by the fact that it accepts the American protectorate against the Soviet Union. At the very least, this provisionally cuts off some of the political potentials of union. The result is a need to live in fragments of what is no doubt a potentially federal system, but fragments which have to live by their own means without any certainty that the theoretical goal will ever be reached. The result is a much more emphatic and detailed elaboration of what constitutes the difference between the Community and the nation states. It is characteristic that historical precedents have played little role in European integration, which has largely developed its own orthodoxy.

In Monnet's case, the behavioural language behind this orthodoxy was also specific and new. His approach broke with the traditional norms of negotiation between states. He conceived it as a kind of search for a common goal among men of good will, gradually breaking down the problem to arrive at solutions which were self-evidently reasonable. When the conference on the Schuman Plan began, the Dutch (who were rather mistrustful) observed with some surprise that Monnet was in open disagreement with his advisors on several points. As Monnet's reputation was formidable even then, they suspected a trap. When they gradually realised they were wrong, and that what was going on was a kind of unconcealed exploration of options, their attitude to the proceedings quite rapidly changed.

In the end, the Schuman Plan conference created a close freemasonry of politicians and higher civil servants, most of whom were very influential later on, and who had the strong feeling of being a team working for Europe's higher good.[9] (The only similar case is the negotiation of the Common Market and Euratom treaties later on, under the chairmanship of Paul-Henri Spaak.) Monnet's approach in effect exploited his own temperament. He sought open debate and simplicity of statement as a means not merely of convincing people but of gaining their trust. He was proud to be told by the heads of the German trade unions, after the disastrous failure of the European Defence Community in 1954,

[9] Max Kohnstamm, interview with the author, 18-19 January 1986.

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that they were ready to follow his lead because "he did what he said, and said what he did".[10]

It was necessary to implant new habits in a milieu shaped for centuries by other approaches. It was not enough, therefore, to state the new goals; they had to be exemplified in practice. Monnet was acutely conscious of this. Accordingly, in the Schuman Plan, he launched a European style of action, as well as institutional principles. For all the changes since, all the dilutions and reversals, that style has remained the standard at the back (even if sometimes well at the back) of Community practice. As a result, from that time on, Monnet in effect embodied the European idea.

## *Narrow Frontiers, Narrow Minds*

One must nevertheless distinguish two phases in Monnet's subsequent career. Up to mid-1955, he played virtually the leading creative part. Although he seems always to have had reservations about the European Defence Community, he apparently prepared the initial project for René Pleven, who by the autumn of 1950 was the French Prime Minister. Monnet did not negotiate this treaty, but worked hard in favour of it. Immediately the EDC was rejected, Paul-Henri Spaak and he seem to have agreed on the need to regain the initiative by relaunching European integration in the economic field. Five months later, when the Mendès-France government fell, Monnet handed Spaak the Euratom project. This was the point of departure of the process which led to the Treaties of Rome.[11] To give political backing to this *relance* in the national capitals, he resigned from the High Authority, and formed his Action Committee for the United States of Europe, on which all the political and trade union leaders sat (apart from the Communists and Gaullists).

The most important of these leaders really did commit themselves: "Action Committee" at the time was an unfamiliar label, with real meaning. The new lobby made a mark from the outset, because the German Socialists, who opposed both Treaties of Paris (on the Coal and Steel Community, and the EDC), joined it, and by removing the main opposition in Germany emphasised the break with the political conditions that had led to the fiasco of the "European Army".

After his departure from the High Authority in June 1955, Monnet remained in close touch with the heads of government. He was for some of them a mentor. None of the other political leaders concentrated to such an extent and with such consistency over such a long period on European integration alone. As a result, he had privileged access to most of the Western chancelleries, all the more because each leader was conscious of Monnet's access to the others. The echoes of this prestige could still be heard in the homage rendered by Helmut Schmidt twenty years later, in 1978, at the time he launched the European Monetary System—Monnet had prefigured this system at the very outset of the Common Market, in proposals prepared with Robert Marjolin, Robert Triffin, and Pierre Uri.

Nevertheless, little by little, Jean Monnet became a centre of influence rather than a driving power. There were two initial reasons for this. One was that he had committed himself in 1955 to Euratom, whereas the Common Market proved a much more far-reaching proposal. Germany had made the Common Market a condition of her commitment to the new European treaties, and in late 1956, after more than a year's hesitation, the French Government, by now under Guy Mollet, accepted this.

Monnet's scepticism concerning the Common Market seems to have been rooted in two anxieties. He feared that the French Parliament might reject it, as it had done the European Defence Community. And he did not see how the Common Market could promote European political unification without an institutional apparatus that would have been far more federal than was conceivable in the aftermath of the EDC failure. Short of that, there was a risk that a customs union would be little more than the free trade dear to the heart of Ludwig Erhard, and without political clout. Yet once the Common Market was set on its way, it flourished, whereas Euratom was slowly strangled, by the Gaullists in particular. Euratom nevertheless rendered at least one service: it provided a bridge for France, which in 1955 had baulked at the Common Market, only to come round to it in the following year, and to ratify it just a few months before General de Gaulle returned to power.

The second reason was that once Monnet had given up his official posts, his personal influence, however broad, did not impinge on governments as it had done from inside the system; and in Paris his remaining powers were greatly reduced when de Gaulle took office again. Still, there was one major exception to this general trend. Until the General, in January 1963, vetoed Britain's entry into the Community, Monnet played an active part in laying the foundations of its foreign policies. This was linked to the second aspect of the strategy initiated by the Schuman Plan: the cumulative leverage brought to bear by the existence of a special relationship between France and Germany.

The Franco-German duo is an example of the "change of context" dear to Jean Monnet, for the new association, even in embryonic form, called in question the old power balances and forced other states to rethink their policies. This was evident in the immediate decision of Italy and Belgium and, with more hesitation, of the Netherlands, to join the negotiations on the Schuman Plan. It was evident again, twelve years later, in Britain's request to negotiate her way into the Community. And as soon as British entry into the Community came on to the political agenda, the potential

[10] Jean Monnet, *Mémoires*, p. 477.

[11] André de Staercke, interview with author, 22 August 1986; Baron Robert Rothschild, interview with author, 20 February 1986.

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for relations with the United States changed too. It was at this point that there emerged perhaps the most daring vision of reconstruction of the international system since the War. Monnet was one of its principal promoters.

ONCE THE Common Market was actually launched, Monnet's reticence about it vanished. On the contrary, he tried to exploit the new Community on the international stage. In 1959, he pushed for the transformation of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), which Britain dominated, by the accession of the United States as a full member. Rather curiously, Monnet thus seems to be at, or near, the source of the existing Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—which is an intergovernmental organisation if ever there was one. He did not see it like that. He wanted the nascent European Economic Community to speak "with a single voice" through the European Commission, in a kind of directorate of the OECD. The idea was to achieve a *de facto* bilateral relationship between the new Community and the United States on all the main questions of Western economic policy—growth; money; relations with the Third World. Soon this idea widened to include the hope of better relations with the Soviet Union. This is more or less the theme of John F. Kennedy's famous speech of 4 July 1962, on partnership between the United States of America and the uniting states of Europe (though at this stage Kennedy was more reticent than Monnet's Action Committee on controlled *détente* with the USSR).

This episode is fascinating from several points of view. First of all, despite its sketchy, preliminary nature, the notion of "partnership" was astonishingly ambitious. What it really tried to offer was a framework for the world system from a Western point of view. It more or less took up in new terms the effort which had miscarried in the United Nations: to provide a structure for the international system. The United Nations was blocked by the Cold War, and by the proliferation of national vetoes. The task it was meant to achieve had therefore to be taken up again, step by step, and in a pragmatic and cumulative way. What made this possible, in Monnet's eyes, was "the ferment of change" generated by European integration.

Second, the "partnership" implied a complex of ideas which were both like and unlike those elaborated round the European Community. The resemblance lay in the idea of equality, applied this time to relations between America and Europe. (This goal appeared in Monnet's texts as early as 1955, when it was still very theoretical.) The dissimilarity was that the "partnership" notion did not fit in at all with the arguments advanced in favour of common institutions in the Community. For one thing, it implied a kind of directorate, with Europe being added to the superpowers. There were echoes in this of Monnet's impatience with small countries whose narrow frontiers, he thought, made narrow minds which in turn stood in the way of radical reforms. It also implied confidence that America and Europe could come to terms with each other—Europeans were not then conscious of Japan—in a relationship conceived in purely bilateral terms.

Theoretically at least, this opened the door on the possibility of disagreements and conflicts between "equal partners". This did not frighten Monnet much. "Interdependence" and the pressure of world problems made cooperation vital. The Western countries shared democratic values, and any conflicts would be secondary against the advantages of common management.

Nothing better illustrates Monnet's fundamental empiricism. He was equally inclined to take risks if he thought something might be gained within the Communities. At the time of the so-called Fouchet Plan, he was strongly tempted to back General de Gaulle's proposals for political cooperation in Europe, despite the ambiguity of the relation they implied between heads of government and the Community institutions. It was more important to lure de Gaulle on to the European bandwagon than to observe any orthodoxy, even Monnet's own.

Finally, "the partnership" showed that Europe was for Monnet as much a beginning as an end in itself. "We are not trying to coalesce states, we are uniting men": that principle is no respecter of frontiers. After the War, there had indeed been a kind of international party of politicians and civil servants—in America as in Europe—for whom "partnership" was a logical extension of the integration already achieved. This school of thought tried to build up political structures able both to prevent a revival of nationalism and to meet the increasingly international needs of a rapidly changing system. It is false, from this point of view, to speak of policy as American or European. These were small groups of influential people who controlled the levers of foreign policy, but were not representative of the state structures as a whole. In the last resort, they were not even very numerous. Once the general political context ceased to be in their favour, their power base was too narrow to allow them to sustain their control. When General de Gaulle blocked their policy, the idea of equality in interdependence gradually began to seem remote from a world restored to national competition.

Yet, despite failures and inconsistencies, the idea of "partnership" can fade for long periods without disappearing altogether. If Monnet's commitment to it seemed ambiguous in the light of the principles he elaborated for the European Communities, this was at least in part because the situation was—and is—itself ambiguous.

EUROPE IS POLITICALLY truncated, not only between East and West, but because on either side of the divide the nation-states are organised in alliances which place limits on traditional sovereignty. Germany, the most powerful country in Western Europe, has had no intention of forgoing American military protection, which means that European sovereignty is in part exercised by the United States. That makes political unity very problematical—all the more so because Britain and France have acquired nuclear deterrents, control of which cannot be shared.

Paradoxically, it is by no means clear that this reduction in the potential autonomy of the state has to be as important today as it would seem from a traditional point of view.

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How far are even the superpowers able to exploit their military superiority? Recent events have tended to cast doubt on the completeness of a form of supremacy whose main effect seems to be to enhance the non-military aspects of power. It is hard to see what Britain and France have gained from their nuclear armaments compared with the economic assets of Japan and Germany. Nuclear weapons seem above all to have "civilianised" relations between the leading states, and thus to change very significantly the relevance of traditional ideas of sovereignty.

If we are indeed living in a kind of *de facto* world confederation (even one virtually without institutions), to which the Third World alone is an exception because it has only partial access to it, then the function of European unity ceases to be self-affirmation in terms of the norms of the past. Its function is not even to ensure peace between the member states, because this is guaranteed by the alliances. In such a system—which corresponds neither to the balance of power as it was known between states in the past, nor to political process as it is known within representative states today—the significance of European union changes. It becomes a kind of countervailing power, *à la* Montesquieu, to improve the balances in economic and political exchanges between different forces operating across the indissoluble cat's-cradle of the global system. It becomes also a way of mobilising political assets to meet challenges which are more and more international. From this point of view, the "partnership" had the advantage of being a first acknowledgement (though premature in the sense that it could not be implemented in the immediate future) of forces which have become more and more assertive; and a hint, though a vague and often optimistic one, at the route to follow in dealing with them.

## *European Options*

THREE TIMES since the French and the Industrial Revolutions—in 1814-15, in 1919, and since 1945—statesmen have tried to learn the lessons of long wars, and to build up an improved system for keeping the peace. Those of the period since 1945 have on the whole displayed a considerable advance on previous efforts. This is no doubt a reflection both of bitter experience and of the growing internationalisation of affairs. But it also required leadership from a small minority of people in strategic positions who were ready to innovate. Jean Monnet was, in his combination of thought and action, the most inventive, often the most acute, and always one of the most tenacious of these people in Europe. He was also, almost without rival, the one with the broadest international outlook.

Like all large-scale historic developments, Europe has been, and had to be, a collective achievement. No individual can take all, or even most, of the credit. To speak only of the main political leaders, Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer and, later, the Dutchman Jan Beyen, Paul-Henri Spaak, and Guy Mollet all at different times played crucial parts. They relied in their turn on teams of committed politicians and civil servants, often of very high quality, who collectively constituted a powerful driving force. Nevertheless, no one was as consistent as Monnet in playing a leading role that spanned the conceptual and practical bands of the spectrum; and this was no doubt the secret of his influence. He was the one who broke down a federalist approach which had hitherto been conceived in terms that were too general, and made it applicable through partial Communities. He was the first to give them a style of operation by his own personal example and to build up a committed core of influential and technically effective support. In this way, he extracted the European idea from its utopian limbo and launched it on the way to practical achievement.[12] With Robert Schuman, who assumed what seemed at the time the dangerous political responsibility for the plan which bears his name, he deserves the title of "Father of Europe" which has sometimes been distributed a little too freely.

All the same, this is not the whole story, by a long shot. What Monnet wanted to do had two sides to it. There was the effort to restore Europe after its steep decline from 1914 to 1945. And there was the effort to restructure the international system from the ground up. He saw no discontinuities between these two activities, which he perceived as part of the same effort to structure peace. Others, no doubt more numerous than he and those who thought like him, were conscious only of the attempt to restore Europe as a great power. Hence the quasi-permanent ambiguity about what his priorities really were, and what history will sift in the end from what he was trying to do.

Reaching a judgment on any individual's contribution to European unity depends on a prior judgment as to whether the whole movement towards integration has really been the product of political will that it seems to be. If the Economic Community—and for all practical purposes, that alone—exists today, may not the forces which produced it also be purely economic? Does one really need to postulate a "European political will" in order to explain it? May it not simply be the result of the realisation by the governments, including General de Gaulle around 1960, that growth demanded wider markets?

Even today, the Single European Act is the result of a tardy realisation that the economic nationalism which still exists in the European states often undermines the biggest European firms in competition with America, and above all with Japan. The steps forward to European unity can be argued to have corresponded every time to the demands of economic necessity and the pace of its development. Economic and institutional interests still seem to mark the limits of the will to integrate. In today's European Community, dominated by the German Federal Republic, it is the *Bundesbank* which exercises the effective vetoes on Community monetary management. In these circumstances, may not everything else be pure façade?

In 1950, Robert Schuman himself, in contrast to Monnet, was sceptical about the supranational potential of his Plan. He was more inclined to see it as a device for surmounting

[12] The idea, now familiar in dealing with Monnet and Europe, of Utopia-made-reality, comes from a speech which he gave to an International Conference of the (German Social Democrat) Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung in 1972, and which was reprinted by the Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe.

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immediate conflicts between France and Germany, and less as the institutional key to a federal Europe.[13] France, under the "most European" governments of the Fourth Republic, has shown how much weight she continued to give to national sovereignty. The Mollet Government, which pushed through the Treaties of Rome, also took some of the basic decisions which produced the French nuclear deterrent. If that has been, and is, the real world, then the founders of the Community are not "the fathers of Europe". The real "fathers" are the industrial-bureaucratic complex of the Federal Republic in 1956, and all those of a like mind in the other Community countries, who promoted a Common Market for economic rather than federal purposes.

BUT IT DOES NOT AT ALL FOLLOW that, because integration has chalked up major European successes only in economic fields, economic forces alone would have produced them. We have become used to the marginalisation of Britain in European integration, because the issue of supranationality was posed at the outset. This conceals the fact that, on purely economic grounds, the country that was potentially isolated was France.

At the Messina Conference, which launched the negotiations of the Treaties of Rome in June 1955, all her partners, even Italy, spoke up in favour of the Common Market. France alone dragged her feet. In Germany and in the Netherlands, the powerful opposition to the Common Market, behind Ludwig Erhard and the port of Rotterdam, lined up under the flag of free trade; a Common Market with France would be far too protectionist and *dirigiste*. After the failure of the European Defence Community, even the Italians leaned for a while towards solutions in the OEEC, which at that time meant accepting the conditions posed by an anti-supranational Britain. In 1967 General de Gaulle even toyed with the idea of a free trade area in order to break the deadlock in relations between the Six which had partly been caused by his policy towards Britain. It is true that for France, Italy and the Netherlands, agriculture was a key factor in any trade agreement. This was obviously an obstacle to any schemes for freer trade with Britain. But Germany was almost as reticent on agriculture as Britain herself.

The Common Market in agriculture proved infinitely difficult to set up, and took several years of Gaullist ultimata and crises. And it was not the only option. If the Community had not been politically available, it would not even have been the most likely one. Robert Marjolin, the top French civil servant in the Common Market negotiations, initially thought in terms of long-term contracts with Germany for cereals and beet sugar, the two products that really mattered to the French.[14]

Once the Common Market had been set up, it proved largely inoperative wherever government procurement entered the equation. The big modern firms, whose thirst for larger markets is often taken on trust as the stimulus for economic integration, were often those which tended to benefit the most from government orders—which are virtually totally directed towards national producers. The European Commission has recently estimated that these represent about 15% of GDP in the Community. Even if one takes account of the substantial element of construction work in this, it clearly represents a significant proportion of manufacturing, often in "high technology" areas such as arms, aerospace, electric power generation, telecommunications, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.[15] There is no Common Market, and almost no element of foreign trade, in public procurement. The nationalism of the bureaucratic-industrial monopolies has been one of the basic reasons for the failure over three decades to turn the Common Market from a customs union into an effective economic union. In these conditions, it is not at all clear that economic arguments suffice to explain the Common Market.

THE MISSING COMPONENT, if one is to make sense of this, is (as one might expect) the political factors. If European integration has built up around the Community model since the War, this must be at least in part because the key issue has been relations between France and Germany. The innovation of the Schuman Plan, from the French point of view, was to break with the policy of controlling or dividing Germany—Poincaré's policy, revived at the Liberation by de Gaulle—and the acceptance that the only alternative with major positive potential was to include both France and West Germany in a common European framework.

Supranationality is a consequence of this basic principle; there can be no confidence between states without some form of arbitration above them. The same concerns could be detected in the abortive European Defence Community and again, after its demise, in the revival of integration that led to the Treaties of Rome. If Jan Beyen and Konrad Adenauer as well as Paul-Henri Spaak committed themselves to a Common Market rather than (with other partners) another form of freeing trade, this was to a great extent because it was necessary to bolster the political transformation which had been promised by the Community approach but was still extremely fragile after the breakdown of the European Army project. In France, the minority of modernisers who were ready to risk entry into the Common Market, despite the hostility of virtually the whole civil service and the fears of much of industry,[16] looked on the customs union as the basis for economic union—which,

[13] Bernard Clappier, interview with Roger Massip in *L'Europe, une longue marche* (Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Lausanne, 1958), pp. 20-29; and interview with the author, 18 April 1988.

[14] Robert de Bruin, *Les Pays Bas et l'Intégration Européenne, 1957-167* (Ph.D. thesis, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, 1978), pp. 426, 486.

[15] Commission des Communautés Européennes, *1992 – Le Défi* (Brussels, 1988), pp.68-69. These figures relate to turnover, not value added (from which GDP is calculated, and which is, of course, considerably smaller—possibly by a half). More precise, though older, are estimates such as that of Ernst-Jürgen Horn of the Institut für Weltwirtschaft, in François Duchêne and Geoffrey Shepherd (eds), *Managing Industrial Change in Western Europe* (Frances Pinter, London, 1987), p.35. Public procurement in Germany in 1980 represented, he says, about 20% of the production value of the domestic investment goods industries.

[16] Robert Marjolin, *Le Travail d'une Vie*, pp. 282-83.

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many of them added, would also be the anteroom to political union. The authority of Guy Mollet, as Prime Minister at the time, was decisive. He was one of those who held such views.

In these circumstances, it is hardly plausible to dissociate economic from political motives in a Community approach which prided itself on fusing substance and form, material resources and institutions. The conflicts around European integration were far from being an illusion of the participants. It is not possible to transform deeply-rooted systems without elements that are both predetermined and politically controversial, and therefore are matters of choice.

MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES; the rise of East Asia; Arms Control to reinforce the nuclear stalemate; possibly the partial integration of Soviet régimes in the international system; the enormous gaps between rich and poor, in particular differences in birth rates with the profound disturbances that could result; and, with climatic change, conflicts of the environment—all these issues confirm the intuition of the internationalists of the last generation. Will the Community they launched lead to a federal Europe; to some sort of subcontinental cooperative, for a limited range of matters, designed to take part more effectively in the management of international affairs; or to a global system in which the Europeans are at the receiving end rather than among the managers?

At the very least, the fact that the Community exists has the enormous advantage of encouraging hope and effort each time the inadequacies of national policies make themselves felt. The Community has still not created a full-fledged Europe, but it has repeatedly, as the apt title of a book by Jacques Van Helmont puts it, provided "European options".

"A stateman is one who can fix distant goals with the power when the time comes to deal with situations he could not initially foresee." Jean Monnet wrote this about Franklin Delano Roosevelt. One may be forgiven for wondering whether he also meant it for himself. It is the very opposite of inevitability. Whether, during a period in which the lobbies have re-established themselves, the statesmen of the European Community will be able to show a similar flexibility of outlook remains to be seen. . . . On this depends the Europe of the future.

## The Assistants

Get up. Get dressed. Get down before
The day gets going, to get on.
If sick, get over it. If flattered, say
"Get on with you." If stuck, get by.
If bored, then get away.

How much these bits can do,
The props and nuts, the tapes and knots, the glue.

I tried to take the underpass; and failed.
I undertook to overturn the world.
I understand that I the undersigned
Am overruled. Or so I overheard.

Insensible to hand or ear or eye:
Where would one look? Above, below, behind,
Out in the world, or back within the mind?
I've never seen an on, an in, a by.

They neither mean, nor are, nor know.
Out of: from under: round about: into:
They come and go.
They join and rearrange. They overcome.
We undergo.

*Laurence Lerner*

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# NOTES & TOPICS

## The Ossetian Connection

### *Letter From the Caucasus— By* LOUIS RAPOPORT

THE TBILISI RADIO announcer who came on the air shortly after a reading of Georgian poetry on 23 February had put it in the bluntest terms. If the public turned out for a Georgian nationalist demonstration called for 25 February, "the keepers of order will beat disturbers of the peace and arrest them by the thousands". A week earlier, in this city where Joseph Stalin studied to be a priest, over 1,000 nationalist students had been pummelled by militiamen and secret police agents in the square next to the Adjara Hotel and the Georgian Republic's Sports Palace. The authorities would come down even harder this time, the announcer promised.

Tbilisi, formerly Tiflis, has one million inhabitants—Georgians, Ossetians, Russians, Armenians, Jews, Mingrelians, and other peoples. Built in a small, temperate valley where the towering North Caucasus and South Caucasus come to an abrupt Great Divide, it retains a touch of the bohemian air which Arthur Koestler noted during a visit over half-a-century ago, despite the grim Soviet buildings that dominate the old city centre. There are few traces of Stalin left—the seminary built along an entire block of the main street has been turned into a museum of Georgian art, though a plaque in Georgian and Russian says that Stalin studied here from 1894 until he was expelled in May 1899. He had arrived just a few months after a formal strike by the Georgian pupils—the seminary was a hotbed of nationalism. Today, at the nearby flower-market, Georgian nationalists cautiously discuss the radio warning, and decide that, come what may, they will turn out for the Saturday demonstration.

Stalin, whose only important writing was the 1913 essay "Marxism and the Nationality Question" (which was more or less dictated to him by Lenin and Bukharin), became the first Soviet Commissar of Nationalities; his mandate was to deal with the many problems of an empire consisting of over 100 distinct peoples. Lenin had sent him to crush the Georgian independent state that came into being after the Revolution. Now it's happening all over again—in Georgia, as in Estonia, Armenia, Latvia, among the 40 million Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, among the Tartars deported from their Crimean homes, the Volga Germans who are being repatriated *en masse* to West Germany, and among the Jews.

It seems that Stalin was only half Georgian—his better half, if he had one. He was in fact at least half Ossetian, and in the Caucasus that means a lot. Some biographers tend to get carried away with his so-called Georgian roots, taking the reader back to Greek legends about ancient Colchis, land of the Golden Fleece, where Jason sowed the poisonous dragon's teeth from which sprang a host of warriors. But while Stalin thought of himself as an Asiatic, and was never able to shake off his thick Georgian accent, he was always the quintessential assimilationist, identifying totally with the Great Russians.

This showed in his treatment of his fellow Caucasians, in his decimation and deportation of eight nationalities—most of them Caucasians—in the 1940s, and in his policy toward the Jews. For the prophet of centralism believed that only the Russian majority was trustworthy—the minorities were unreliable, even hostile.

THE GEORGIANS and most other peoples of the Caucasus fought long and fiercely against Russian hegemony; the Czars only managed to conquer that vast, mountainous region in the middle of the 19th century, around the time when Stalin's father, Vissarion Ivanovich Djugashvili, was born. Georgia itself had become part of Russia in 1801. The Ossetians, a Persian-related people living in the highest altitudes of the central and northern Caucasus—an area which Karl Marx referred to as "the knees" of the Russian Empire—were the only Caucasian nation to welcome the Russians.

Although there is no documentary evidence that Stalin was part-Ossete, the link has been made by some of his most perspicacious enemies, including Leon Trotsky and the poet Osip Mandelstam, whose unwritten anti-Stalin poem ridiculed "the peasant-killer Iosif the Ossete", the swaggering mountaineer. These two Russian geniuses, neither of whom identified with their Jewish origins, were to share a common destiny—liquidated on the Ossete's personal orders.

Trotsky, whose brains were spilled on the manuscript of his unfinished biography of Stalin, was one of many writers



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who have described the Caucasus as a vast ethnographic museum, deeply influenced by the Persians and Turks. He remarked on Stalin's "Asiatic" character, and on Bukharin's characterisation of him as "Genghis Khan". Although he repeated other writers' digs at the Georgians ("slovenly and shiftless . . . less intelligent than the other Caucasians"), Trotsky—carefully distancing himself from the taint of racism—said that social causes, not national characteristics, accounted for Georgian backwardness. He mentions reports, stemming from Georgian émigrés, that Stalin's mother, Ekaterina Georgievna Geladze, was not Georgian but Ossetian; and other assertions that it was Vissarion Djugashvili, Stalin's drunken, child-beating father, who was the Ossete. He quoted Joseph Iremashvili, a boyhood friend of Stalin's, who described Vissarion as "a coarse, uncouth person, like all the Ossetians, who live in the high Caucasian mountains".

Boris Souvarine, Stalin's French biographer, said that the mixture of races in the Caucasus made it impossible to search for pure racial characteristics in Stalin, who as a boy had witnessed racial strife between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Georgians and Armenians, Ossetians and Georgians. But Souvarine, writing in the late 1930s, quoted old socialist émigrés from the Caucasus who insisted that:

> "Catherine Djugashvili was an Osse (Ossetinka) . . . and attach great importance to this detail: not only are the Ossetes less subtle and more crude than the Georgians, but Russia has always recruited among them a strong proportion of gendarmes and of convict-guards."

In Tbilisi, Professor Alexander Drushchinsky, whose Ossete father was a government minister in Soviet South Ossetia (and Stalin's secret police chief there until he was executed during the early years of the Great Terror), told me:

> "My father's mother knew everyone. Djugashvili is a Georgian version of the Ossetian name Jugaev. She said that Stalin's father was an Ossete."

Georgians who are proud of Stalin don't like to mention his Ossetian half, while those who hate him make a point of saying he was an Ossetian.

At the old synagogue a few hundred metres from Stalin's birthplace, I spoke to the seventy-year-old sexton, who was born in Gori. "Djugashvili is definitely an Ossetian name", he told me. "In my parents' time and up to now, there were always many Ossetians in Gori, and they mixed. Everything is mixed." The congregants backed him up. The sexton, or *gabbai*, would only give his Hebrew name: Aharon Ben Daniel.

THE OSSETIANS, numbering approximately a quarter of million in Stalin's youth and about 800,000 today, were a people of mixed Iranian-Japhetic (Caucasian) origin, who later mixed with the conquering Scythians—an ancient Persian-related people known for their savagery. They made their home in the icefields in the middle of the Great Caucasus, where Prometheus stole fire from heaven and was chained to a rock. The fire-worshipping tribe, living among the knife-edged massifs where tigers and leopards roamed, called their capital Dzhaudzhikau; it was later renamed Ordzhonikidze, after one of Stalin's cronies. Most of the Ossetians spoke a dialect called Iron, and lived in a district of the same name (poetically fitting for an area where the Iron Age began—and for the Ossetians' most famous son, who called himself "man of steel"). According to the Ossetians, the name Iron is derived from Iran.

Some of the Ossetians (also known as Alans) converted to Judaism after the entire Caucasus was conquered in the early Middle Ages by the Jewish kagans of Khazaria. In 1245, Plano Carpini reported the presence of Jewish Ossetians in the Northern Caucasus, but there has been no trace of them in recent centuries. Traditionally, the Georgians protected their Jewish neighbours against Ossetian attackers—but there were never massive pogroms in Georgia, where Jews have lived for 2,500 years in relative peace. Most Ossetians became Muslims—Shi'ites, like their Iranian relatives—but there were many Christians among them. However, even today says Professor Drushchinsky, the Ossetians "retain many pagan traditions".

In the 18th century, the Christianised Ossetians joined with the Christian Georgians, and sought Great Russian support against the Turks and Persians. (Stalin, in his 1913 essay, spoke of the Georgians as having "incited" the Persians and Turks against one another.)

George F. Kennan, former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, referred to the Ossetian connection in *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (1961).

> "[Stalin] had certain well-known characteristics of the Caucasian mountain race to which his father is said to have belonged—an inordinate touchiness, an endless vindictiveness, an inability to ever forget an insult or a slight, but great patience and power of dissimulation in selecting and preparing the moment to settle the score."

One sentence that Joseph Iremashvili wrote about his boyhood friend has been quoted by numerous biographers of Stalin: the "undeserved, frightful beatings" administered to Stalin by the alcoholic Vissarion "made the boy as grim and heartless as was his father". Other Georgians said Stalin was a bastard, the son of an important Czarist official who had had an affair with a young Ossetian servant-girl. According to Professor Drushchinsky:

> "Keke [Ekatrina] was a common whore—that's why Stalin called her a whore. No one could be sure if Vissarion Djugashvili was the father."

Georgian intellectuals quoted Lermontov's classic novel about the Caucasus, *A Hero of our Time,* linking Vissarion Djugashvili, who was stabbed to death in a drunken brawl when Stalin was about eleven, to the line: "You may be sure that the end will be bad: it is always so with these Asiatics: they get tight on *buza* [hemp wine, from whence derives the word booze], and the knife-play starts." Lermontov's dashing Czarist officer says of the Ossetians:

> "They can't even say 'bread' in Russian, but they've managed to learn 'Officer, give me a tip'. In my opinion, even the Tatars are better: at least they don't drink."

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Lermontov, a Great Russian, ridiculed the Georgians in his poem "The Deserter". Not surprisingly, given the pecking order of nationalities, in Georgian translations of this poem the deserter has become an Ossetian. The two peoples hated each other—the Ossetians regarding Georgians as lazy, pleasure-loving bohemians, and the Georgians calling Ossetians worshippers of work, and thieves who had stolen their land. Stalin himself published some poems in a nationalistic Georgian journal during his youth, but it was obviously a brief flirtation—and poetry has always been a way of life among all strata of society in Georgia.

ANOTHER SOURCE OF conflict between the Georgians and Ossetians was created in the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks before and especially immediately after the Revolution. The Georgians, who set up an independent government in their country in accord with the short-lived principle that Soviet republics had the right to secede, were all Mensheviks. The Ossetians therefore felt they had to be Bolsheviks, especially when the Georgian Mensheviks gave local Jews the right to elect Jewish deputies to the new parliament.

Throughout his life, Stalin maintained his connections with individual Ossetians and the people as a whole. In 1913, the same year in which he wrote his essay on Marxism and the nationality question, the 36-year-old Stalin was sent into Siberian exile with one of his revolutionary contemporaries, Jacob Sverdlov, who would soon become the first Soviet President. The two men came to hate each other. They were romantic rivals vying for the affections of a fellow exile, the actress Vera Aleksandrova Delenskaya, of the Moscow Arts Theatre, who chose the intellectual Jew over the uncouth Caucasian. It was at this time that, according to Trotsky, Stalin "revealed himself as an anti-Semite, resorting to coarse Georgian expressions against the Jews".

Furthermore, Stalin violated the code of the political exiles by befriending a policeman named Kibirov, one of the many Ossetians who served as Russian guards and constables. Under the Soviets too, an extremely high proportion of secret police agents and prison guards were drawn from the Ossetians. According to a still-current Georgian joke, "the Ossetians' national instrument is the police whistle". (Stalin told his fellow exiles that his friendly relations with the Ossetian policeman would not deter him, if the time came, from doing away with the man as a political enemy.)

The monastic Stalin loved stark Siberia. He loathed his feudal southern birthplace, where he had suffered the insults of the priests in the newly-built seminary where he had clandestinely studied revolutionary tracts alongside the religious texts. "He loved Russia, not Georgia", his daughter Svetlana wrote.

## *Georgia On My Mind*

ETHNIC ANIMOSITIES **have always been present in the Soviet Union, but only since *glasnost*, which has allowed non-Russians openly to explore their national past, to organize and to articulate their grievances, have these differences exploded into the sort of conflict we are more used to seeing in Northern Ireland or Sri Lanka.**

**The most recent example was in the southern Soviet republic of Georgia, where 18 demonstrators were killed by troops at the weekend while exercising their new-found street power against the Abkhazians, who live in the north-west of the republic and are demanding secession from their Georgian masters. . . .**

A CROSSING POINT *for migratory tribes moving east, west, north, and south, situated on the Silk Road, Georgia became home for Kurds, Greeks, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Abkhazians, Ossetians, Assyrians and others. Before the rise of nationalism, these peoples lived reasonably peaceably together, but early in the 19th century Georgia was absorbed by the Russian empire and entered a European orbit in which the ideas of the Risorgimento, the German Tugendbund and the Polish and Greek independence fighters inspired the young everywhere. A fierce nationalism took root, and Georgians have given their Russian rulers trouble ever since.*

THE DEMONSTRATIONS **last weekend were directed primarily not at the Russians but at the 80,000 Abkhazians, who give their name to the Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic but comprise only 17% of its population, outnumbered as they are by Georgians, Russians and Armenians . . . .**

THERE ARE *other potential Ulsters in Georgia. The 120,000-strong Ossetians, who speak a language related to Iranian, occupy an autonomous region in the north of the Georgian republic, separated from their co-ethnics in the North Ossetian autonomous republic across the border in the Russian republic. The Georgians justifiably fear that the Ossetians will want to unite into a single republic.*

*Borders and administrative statuses which had been considered fixed under Brezhnev have now been put into question by Gorbachov. The Ossetians can see no logical reason why they are any less a nation than the Georgians and why they should not have equal status in the Soviet federation.*

GORBACHOV HAS **recognised that the Soviet nationalities question is "a most fundamental and vital issue" and has called for a Central Committee plenum in June or July this year to give nationality policy a total rethink.**

**One solution recently put forward by Soviet scholars is national cultural autonomy. This aims to give national minorities extra-territorial cultural and political rights over their own co-ethnics, regardless of their territorial administrative status. This was the policy of Austro-Marxists attempting to maintain the Austro-Hungarian empire against internal nationalist separatism, and was fiercely condemned by Lenin as an encouragement to nationalism.**

*Stephen Jones*
*in* THE TIMES *(London)*

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Apparently, he loved Ossetia, too. At the pinnacle of his power, 30 years after Siberia, Stalin generously gave the Ossetians a large area of the homelands confiscated from the Caucasian nations who had been their neighbours: the Chechens, Ingushi, Karachai and Balkars, all of whom he deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan. At the same time, Stalin destroyed many Ossetian individuals—"the best elements"—although the proportion of his Ossetian victims may have been smaller than among other nationalities. But the fact that he gave the land of four of the eight nations deported during the 1940s to the obscure Ossetians strengthens the suggestion that Stalin was more Ossete than Georgian. On 10 February 1948, the Central Committee even went so far as to heap praise on the Ossetians' behaviour during the 1917 Revolution, while savaging the Chechens and Ingushi.

In the memoirs of G. A. Tokaev, a Soviet colonel of Ossetian background—and the highest-ranking defector to the West in the late 1940s—Stalin is never referred to as a fellow Ossete, but is characterised as a "reactionary, racial *Russachestvo*", intent on Great Russian dominance.

Referring to Stalin's deportations of the eight nations, Tokaev wrote: "From racial discrimination Stalin moved rapidly and with his usual crude logic to racial extermination, to genocide. . . ." In September 1944, to commemorate the defeat of the Nazis at the edge of the capital of North Ossetia, Stalin-Djugashvili restored to Ordzhonikidze its Ossetian name Dzhaudzhikau (alternately, Dzaudzyqau or Dzhaudzhikau): Serge Ordzhonikidze, Stalin's crony whom he drove to suicide during the Great Terror, was no longer worth remembering. After Stalin's death the capital was once more renamed Ordzhonikidze.

Days after the 1917 Revolution, Stalin had proclaimed a new era for the peoples of the Old Russia, all of whom would have the right to independence. Under the Soviet Constitution, all peoples were guaranteed equal rights, but Great Russian chauvinism prevailed. In the saturnalias held at the dacha at Kuntsevo in the last decade of his rule, Stalin hailed the ideas of pan-Slavism, while cursing the Jews.

"Scholarly studies" of the history of the Caucasus published in Stalin's last years constantly made the Ossetian/Georgian dictator's point: "Many Caucasian peoples, unable because of their dispersed character to withstand foreign aggression, sought salvation and intercession from the Russian state . . ." read one such tract, published in Moscow in 1950. In the same year, all Soviet secondary students were taught that:

> ". . . annexation by Russia represented the only path of social-economic and cultural development and also salvation of national existence for the peoples of the Caucasus and Transcaucasus threatened with conquest . . . or with colonial enslavement by capitalist Britain and France . . . the annexation by Russia was the only means of saving themselves, preserving their ancient cultures and developing economically and culturally."

The same lesson was drawn for all the nationalities. There were constant references to treacherous activities by bourgeois-nationalists—especially, in the last five years of Stalin's life, the Jews. Innumerable books and essays focused on such "reactionary movements" as the 19th-century followers of the Kazakh Sultan Kenessary Kasymov, who "dragged the Kazakh people back, toward the strengthening of patriarchal-feudal principles, to a restoration of the medieval khanite régime and to the detachment of Kazakhstan from Russia and the great Russian people." Within months of this publication, the Jewish people were accused of plotting to detach Crimea from the USSR.

The reinterpretation of Caucasian history in order to glorify the Great Russians was noted by American diplomats in the USSR in March 1951. It was evident that the Soviet intention was to "remove, or at least diminish, nationalist traditions . . . especially those traditions related to conflict with Russia". The diplomatic dispatch reported that all works on Lermontov's "Caucasus writings" were to be reviewed—the poet's remarks about both the Georgians and the Ossetians were a continuing irritant to both of these peoples.

But all of this came at the end of Stalin's long career, just before his planned "resettlement of the Jews to the East", which was aborted only by his death. He was also going to deport the Mingrelians, the Georgian-related people from which Beria sprang.

The huge museum in Gori which Beria built to memorialise his living god has been closed to visitors since


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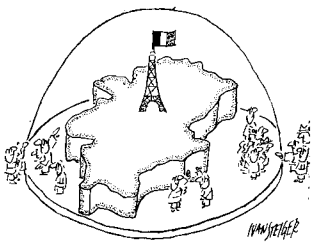
November. When I visited Stalin's birthplace in Gori, a Russian woman stood in front of the "log cabin" now encased in Greek marble, and lamented the anti-Stalinist movement. "Stalin was a great man", she said, "a great Russian."

Many of the captive nations are today in turmoil, seeking full autonomy if not independence from the promoters of *perestroika*. But one people that remains totally indifferent to "the curse of nationalism" is the Ossetian nation—still the main Caucasian police circle of the USSR. They are more than likely to support those numerous opponents of Mikhail Gorbachov who wish to restore Great Russian hegemony.

# Paris Notebook

## *By Jean-François Revel*

## Socialist-Communist Pacts: The French Exception



RACIST MASSACRES in Burundi, the implosion of Burmese socialism; the extermination of the Kurds; Colonel Gaddafi urging the Libyans to get rich by their own efforts and move up the social ladder; Soviet housewives heckling Gorbachov, no longer to demand a radiant future but simply some sausage and hot water; the disclosure of figures showing that the developed capitalist economies are doing pretty well, all things considered, and regaining a healthy growth-rate—to name but a few examples showing that events, for better and for worse, may pack a bigger surprise than our boldest imaginings.

Left-wingers ransack West Berlin to protest against the International Monetary Fund, yet remain indifferent to instances of genocide in the Third World. Never have we fought so hard for human rights. At least, so we believe. Yet at no time since the Second World War has violation of human rights in its most radical form—the physical destruction of whole populations by direct violence or artificially induced famine—occurred on so vast a scale. Presumably, then, we are not fighting in the right way or in the right place. We are still trying to meet realities with concepts that are no longer appropriate to them and failing to see the most important events.

For example, we refer to the collapses occurring throughout the Communist world as "reforms". A reform, however, is a modification made, if not wholly without fuss, at least with a modicum of calm, to a more or less healthy system with a view to affecting some improvements. We find nothing of the kind in the Communist systems. In Europe, Asia, and Africa the mighty engine has simply stopped working. The ship is keeling over. *Perestroika* (or its equivalents outside Russia) is not one choice among a number. It is a life-raft. And one, moreover, that is itself sinking. Wherever we look it is as if the world is trying to rid itself of Communism, and Communism is fighting back by giving way. Clearly this disaster does not flow from a free decision on the part of the governments concerned. *Perestroika* is simply an attempt to stem the flood without too radical a change of régime.

Similarly, the decline in the Communist vote, which in France is put down to the tactics of François Mitterrand, is in fact happening all over Europe. Apart from the tiny Swedish Communist Party, which backs the Socialists in parliament, the Communists are everywhere out of the running. So, in leaning towards a patching up of the Socialist-Communist alliance, France's Socialists constitute the exception. Like many people, I derived keen intellectual pleasure from a book recently published in France, *La République du centre*.[1] However, I take issue with its subtitle: "*La fin de l'Exception française* (The End of the French Exception)". France is still exceptional—in the antiquated habits of its Socialists.

In every other EEC country, as far as the local Socialist Party is concerned, collaboration with the Communists has been a non-starter for years. More than a decade has passed since Socialists in Spain, Italy and Portugal even entertained the notion. The last ministerial crisis in Portugal prompted the Socialist president, Mario Soares, to call for fresh elections, which gave the Liberals an absolute majority. He could, without dissolving parliament, have organised a Socialist-Communist majority; it was mathematically possible in the existing Chamber. He did not even consider doing so. In Spain, Felipe Gonzalez has contrived both to smash the Spanish Communist Party and to make the Spanish economy one of the most vigorous in the new Europe.

Italy offers an even more marked contrast with France. The Communist Party is still very strong there. In fact it is the strongest in Europe. Nevertheless, it has dropped more than ten points in ten years, and today Bettino Craxi's Socialists have virtually caught it up. Above all, the Italian Communist Party is quite ambiguously marginal as far as the parliamentary majority is concerned, cut off from it at national level by an impenetrable iron curtain. We were even treated to the delightful spectacle, at the Christian Democrats' traditional "Festival of Friendship" in Verona last September, of the Socialists fiercely rebuking the Christian Democrats for their occasional "immoral associations" with the Communists on certain city councils, which they castigated as "irregular"!

What is more—and this is where we see just how big a gulf separates them from the French Socialist Party—Italy's Socialists have been embarked for some months now on a relentless exposure of Italian Stalinism. In particular, they

[1] *La République du centre*. By FRANÇOIS FURET, JACQUES JULLIARD, and PIERRE ROSANVALLON. Calmann-Lévy.

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have instituted virulent posthumous proceedings against Palmiro Togliatti, the celebrated, even "historic" General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party who died in Yalta in 1964. Togliatti contrived to acquire a certain liberal reputation in 1956 when he welcomed Khrushchev's report on the crimes of Stalin. In fact, Togliatti had himself been an active accomplice in those crimes. Serving in Moscow at the height of the Terror as second-in-command at the Comintern, he had helped Stalin assassinate or deport those Italian opponents of Fascism who had sought refuge in the USSR. Moreover, he had persistently hushed up these hideous deeds after his return to Italy in 1945.

But the Italian Socialist Party has gone further, launching an investigation into "Stalinism in the Italian Left". That was the title of a symposium held in Rome in March 1988, the proceedings of which were published in September. In these pages the Party does not spare itself, because for a long time, under Pietro Nenni, it and the Communists were allies. Here is how the great historian Renzo De Felice, author of a seminal history of Fascism and himself a socialist, concluded his paper on the subject of Hitlerism and Communism.

> "The fact of the matter is that we are dealing with identical phenomena. Totalitarianism typified and defined Nazism as it did Stalinism—with no real difference. I may have put that a bit bluntly. But in my opinion it is time we stuck to the facts and thrust erroneous and useless myths behind us."

De Felice recalled that the USSR had entered the War unwillingly—and because Hitler had attacked it on account of its excesssive demands in the matter of carving up Europe.

On the occasion of the newspaper's festival (the Italian equivalent of the French *Fête de "L'Humanité"*) in Florence at the beginning of September, *L'Unità,* the Italian Communist Party daily, published a long essay by a leading figure in the Party, Achille Occhetto, explaining that the time had come for Communists to accept liberal capitalism. To mark the change, he suggested dropping the hammer and sickle emblem! Even better, the 11 September issue of the same newspaper expatiated on the misdeeds of the state in the economic sphere!

BACK ON THE other side of the Alps, what do we find in France? A Socialist Party reverting to the worst archaisms of *"la langue de bois* (wooden language)", despite all the Prime Minister's efforts to *"parler vrai* (talk straight)". A First Secretary of the Party who, on the subject of the role of the Communists in World War II, slips back into the old habit of falsifying history. The French Socialist Party still allows itself to be bullied by the Communist Party, its little brother in political terms but its big brother ideologically. Pierre Mauroy even lags behind the USSR's *glasnost.* We see our political class floundering between two quarrels that belong to another era: the row about the far Right, and the row about the Communist past. To cap it all, in the media and in public opinion we find a revival of the cult of personality, made up of a curious blend of retrospective "de Gaulle-olatry" and current "tontonmania".[2] None of these modes of behaviour constitutes a particularly cogent symptom of political modernisation. Far from marking "the end of the French exception", they seem to me to highlight it.

However, if it is any consolation, what the Socialists will not do through the exercise of their intelligence, they will sooner or later be forced to do by the facts. This has happened to all the governments of the world, and it even happened to the Socialists themselves back in 1983 and 1984. The political powers-that-be, whatever their colour, end up obeying the momentum of the age more than their own ideologies. The Socialist cabinets governing today are pursuing liberal policies; the liberal governments of the 1970s pursued social-democratic policies. Between 1970 and 1980 the purchasing power of the guaranteed minimum wage in France gained a great deal more ground than did the average wage. This advantage accruing to the guaranteed minimum wage paradoxically diminished from 1981 through the five years of Socialist administration. Why? Clearly not as the result of a free decision, but because firms found the employer's social-security contribution involved in raising low wages more and more onerous.

We had to wait for the Rocard Government's recent employment plan before anyone dared to say what all economists knew, namely that the cost of low wages in employers' social-security contributions discourages employers from taking on staff and creates unemployment. A liberal penning that truth ten years ago would have been torn to pieces. Now even "revolutionary" Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) has embarked on a course of "rectification", restoring to the private sector the disastrous state farms that had ruined agricultural production, as they do everywhere. Like it or not, the industrial countries that rank above France in the international tables are those where direct taxation has been drastically reduced in recent years or has remained at a low level.

Sooner or later, words must inevitably bow to facts. Whether "openness" or archaism, the theories of a party have little purchase on reality, which evolves as it will. A

[2] Directed at "Uncle" François Mitterrand [Tr.].

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party may, by dint of ideological rigidity, slow the process down, as the French Socialist Party did in 1981 and 1982. But however reckless its verbal bravado, one day it will have to fall back into line, even if it does not really understand what is happening to it. It is better, of course, to understand one's age, the better to act upon it. That way one can govern rapidly. Others prefer, as Paul Valéry put it, to "enter the future backwards" rather than look it in the face. But even if they stumble a few times, they always do enter it in the end, in good shape or bad.

That is why it is possible, depending on one's point of view, to agree or disagree with Jacques Julliard when, in *La République du centre,* he bewails "France's reaching zero degrees on the democratic scale" and notes, in connection with the elections of spring 1988, "the elimination of any ideas from the candidates, anything at stake in the ballot, and any mandate on the part of the voters". Certainly, the voters were ill-informed. They did not know, for example, that France was back on 3% growth and had once again, for the first time since 1980, begun to create industrial jobs and to invest on a massive scale.

However, "the void of political thought" is not always where you think it is. Often an impression of intellectual poverty is created when an erroneous theory collapses. One would like to see it replaced by an equally ingenious construction. One would like the new solution to be as alluring as the old. But that is not its function. The Newtonian principle is far simpler and more banal than Aristotelian physics, which lent itself very much more readily to interminable commentaries capable of keeping countless intellectuals busy for centuries on end.

Since 1971, Socialist output in terms of fine-spun manifestos has coupled astounding ideological opulence with utter operational sterility. Richness of thought is often only apparent. So is poverty of thought. There is no current dearth either of ideas, or of information, or of knowledge. We know the gist of what we need to know in order to govern well. The real danger is not poverty of thought. It is poverty of action.

# A Biography

## *By Gillian Tindall*

GEORGES BERNARDET was born the year before the First World War and died at the beginning of this year. He left very little behind him that was not general family property: a few brief letters to me, in a ceremonial script, one telling me that the primroses were out and *une merveille* . . . a dog-eared handful of the papers without which no Frenchman can officially exist . . . and a very few clothes, including his regular working gear: baggy striped trousers reminiscent of an English country solicitor *circa* 1910, a much-mended black alpaca jacket, and a cap. Rarely did I ever see him, outdoors or in, without a cap. I have difficulty now in imagining him without one in his grave in the fertile earth, the same village earth that he himself dug and ploughed and sowed from the age of twelve to the days before his death.

LONG AGO, he had enjoyed his few years in school, was interested in the world, collected facts (latterly from television) about such places as India and China; facts which he then integrated into a global picture based on the pastures, streams and crops of his own central France. On that landscape he was a treasure-trove of exact, detailed information—treasure-trove because it was the expertise of generations, a world we have lost and which is lost further with his going.

Much of it had been transmitted directly from his grandfather, his particular version of the Real Grown-up we all carry within us. Grandfather, born in the 1840s, was a landless labourer, never learnt to read but could "calculate anything in his head"; at the end of each long day he used to go with a borrowed mule to dig lime for mortar and to pick up big stones; thus, in time, he built an entire house. Georges, with the same perservering ethic, also inherited the house-gene: he had a number of houses. One of them he sold to us, though, as if unwilling to relinquish it entirely, he grew vegetables for us in its garden. In his childhood, he told us, the house was called the Pope's House. Why? *"Ah—je ne sais pas. Mais mon grandpère, lui, il aura su."*

His French, never slovenly, had touches of elegance, a "best" language. At home he spoke a broader dialect. He was politely puzzled if I made mistakes in gender—how could I not, for instance, know from my own language that a scythe is feminine?—and became thoughtful when I explained that gender is not constant, or even existent, from one tongue to another.

He used the archaic *à présent* for "now", as if with the implication that time were circular and everything came back in season. Now I find myself thinking, *Il est mort, à present.* . . .

His mother and father were shadowy figures. They had numerous children, and when Georges was five his childless godmother suggested that she and her husband should take him on. "Be off with you", said his father shortly. "It's a good opening for you." So the five-year-old went, but at first mourned his brothers and sisters and the comfortless home two kilometres away across muddy tracks. His godmother's husband, a plasterer by trade, coaxed him: "Stay with us, and I'll make you a little wheelbarrow, just your size, so that you can give me a hand." The child, to whom the very concept of a toy was unknown, was thrilled. "I'll stay till I get the wheelbarrow", he said to himself. "Then I'll take it home and show them!" But by the time the wheelbarrow was made he had settled down to being his godparents' child and into the feeling that he was specially chosen and therefore specially responsible—a concept that was to infuse his life with meaning for the next 70 years.

The War, to which he was an unwilling recruit, turned out

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to be his heroic period. Taken prisoner at the Fall of France like half a million other Frenchmen, he talked his way out of the gate of the deportation camp on a pretext and then escaped back home across hundreds of miles of France without civilian clothes, money or papers, and without even knowing whether his village was itself occupied. After that archetypal voyage he never travelled again. It was enough for him.

I eventually bestowed some of the details of that journey on a character in a novel. I did not tell him so, fearing that he, who disliked even being photographed, might feel more robbed than flattered. Should I have told him? He was interested in the idea of my writing, watched me at it once or twice, warned me about over-straining the brain by working late. Although no respecter of God, he seemed to regard my work as some sort of obligation imposed on me by a higher authority (family? educational chiefs?) to whom I had no choice but to submit. He considered himself, out in the fresh air, keeping early hours, far more fortunate.

In the 1950s, when cracks of opportunity were at last opening in the antiquated façade of French life, friends suggested that he might leave the drudgery of small farming, that with his acumen he could well join the Gendarmerie or start a business. But Georges Bernardet liked his life as it was: the earth was there to be worked, "his" earth, by now becoming extensive in the district. He would pine, away from it, and from the fences, gates, hedges, outhouses, barn roofs, ladders and wheelbarrows that were his handiwork.

I said he left very little behind him, but it seems to me now that he left more than most men.

## Sea Lady

Someone's crept out of the sea,
lying on the pebbles, in pain,
like a crippled labrador.
She raises one arm, a lady
in a siesta, languidly,
though night's falling, in this January rain.

Hearing my crunch on the shingle,
she's turning her bitch-soft eyes and whiskers to vet me.
I'm coming too close,
and she growls and hisses and whispers,
tensing my tail with her speech,
though I know she can't get me.

Hurt? Perhaps she's tired?
But I'm too close, so she levers her spine
and flops down a shingle bank and under the ocean,
periscopes twice with her head,
then hoists ashore,
crutching her legless rear up the steep incline.

Who'd want to be sick if they lived in the ocean?
And who'd bark
so hard after fish, they'd give up the earth,
lose hands and legs,
freezing the warm blood back
to the cold, to feel after fish in the dark?

I sit in my lights by the fire, listening to Mozart,
reading Gibbon.
Looking for swag,
a Diocletian legionary found
a beautiful leather purse of priceless pearls.
He threw the loot away and kept the bag.

For what's no use can have no value.
And in the morning she
who loves the waters I left behind
is gone like a piece of flotsam,
a bag of pearls,
that always is and always will be far out at sea.

*Herbert Lomas*

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# No Way In, Go In

## *Exploring Samuel Beckett—By* ANDREW SHELLEY

IT APPEARS TO BE true of Beckett, as he said in homage to the painter Jack B. Yeats, that before this "high solitary art uniquely self-pervaded", "the lenitive of comment" and the strict prescriptions of commentators can "Merely bow in wonder". This was a gesture which Beckett perfected when he, as it were, bowed out from a volume celebrating the centenary of James Joyce's birth: "I welcome this occasion to bow once again, before I go, deep down, before his heroic work, heroic being." If Beckett's early work was a spin-off from Joyce's centrifugal, "all-including" aesthetic, Beckett's mature work bows to the centripetal necessity, after Joyce had exhausted the "plane of the feasible", to explore the depths, welcoming as an occasion the all-excluding absence of occasion. In this sense Beckett's whole work is a going down before, or after, Joyce; even as in bowing "deep down" it also withdraws from Joyce, declining the high responsibilities of the omnipotent and omniscient author and accepting (as Beckett once said in an interview) the no less stringent disciplines of "ignorance, impotence".

"The twin movement full of grace" (in the words of *Ill Seen Ill Said*) which Beckett executed in the "tribute" to Joyce quoted above, is a characteristically Beckettian feat of equilibrium. For Beckett's scrupulous even-handedness requires that the gesture with which the hand gives should be the same as the one with which it takes away, that almost every word should be purgatorially suspended between affirmation and negation, every apparent positive balanced by its negative, and every expiation itself a crime. Beckett has praised the "twin movement" of St Augustine's maxim: "Do not despair. One of the thieves was saved. Do not presume. One of the thieves was damned." In a version of such a poising of salvation against damnation, Beckett, just after Richard Ellmann's death, spoke highly of his Joyce biography but added a qualification which saw how its virtues were the sins of an entirely different realm: "I can't agree to the use of private letters, of course." The good of "a very fine biography" was the evil of a deplorable invasion of privacy.[1]

One of the very few pieces of criticism of his own work which Beckett approves of—it "warmed the cockles"—is one which speaks of the futility of criticism of work such as his. In a review of *Molloy* (*Combat*, 12 April 1951), Maurice Nadeau wrote: "In whatever way one seeks to define [Beckett], one can only betray him, and even more seriously by interpretation than by analysis." Like Moran, we may enter the forest upon various critical bicycles, or rather hobbyhorses, "But we too will come out of it on our elbows and our knees".

Nadeau's prophecy was not entirely accurate, for—as if fearing to fulfil it—Beckett critics have tended to *enter* the forest on their knees, in attitudes not of humility but of excessive reverence. In a twin movement notably lacking in grace, many of them bow down before a body of work which they regard as encapsulating the distilled essence of the entire previous literary tradition, at the same time exalting themselves as the custodians of that shrine. So Beckett critics, like the newsagent in *Watt,* characteristically proceed in "a series of aborted genuflections"; the very reverence they accord Beckett as champion of a precious ideal of literature (which would otherwise lack living exemplars), as having an "ineffable" value, prematurely aborts their critical endeavour to say what this value is or to "eff" it. This, however, is perceived not as a problem but as an opportunity, especially in America (land of opportunity) where academics, like *The Unnamable,* have to keep spewing forth words in order to placate "they".

BECKETT'S UN-PIN-DOWNABLE *quidditas,* far from depriving effing "critics" of all occasion, inexhaustibly provides the "craze for explication" (in the words of *Catastrophe*) with a fund of occasions on which to try, and fail, to retrieve the "real meaning".

> "He picked up Watt's hat and brought it to him, saying, Your hat sir, I think.
>
> Watt looked at his hat. Was it possible that this was his hat.
>
> He put it on his head."

[1] Samuel Beckett, conversation with Andrew Shelley, 5 August 1987.



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Beckett's works are strewn with such hats, in the form of throw-away references to the whole body of human culture. Any critic who picks them up must be careful. Innumerable books that have been written about Beckett have presented him with a whole Ascot of headgear—existentialist berets, nihilist balaclavas, absurdist cap-and-bells, mad-hatter toppers. All can be said to fit, but none of them can Beckett be said to wear. "He put it on his head." But who put it on whose head? It is more than likely that it is the critic-news-agents—dealers in printed ephemera, in Beckett's eyes—who put their own hat on Beckett's head (some of them without the grace of "I think"), while pretending to restore to him the mislaid hat of his "real intention". "Solution clapped on problem like snuffer on candle", as Beckett said in an early review.

TO RETRIEVE textual cast-offs and to fit them within a narrative of the creative process is the business of manuscript studies such as Rosemary Pountney's meticulously researched *Theatre of Shadows*.[2] Much of their interest inevitably derives from the titillation of censored or restricted texts, such as that perused (in an early draft) by the three women of *Come and Go*.

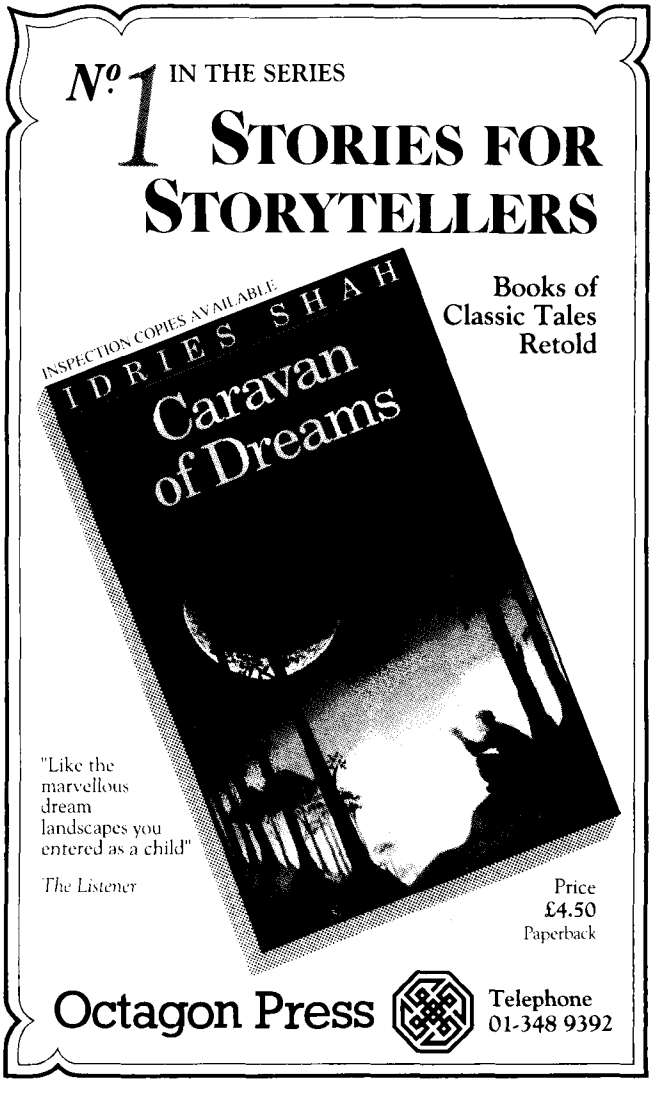
> POPPY: ". . . Aubrey stretched out to the flames his long hairy legs, took a sip of his Sandeman, relit his cigar and resumed alone his collection of obscene postcards."
> VIOLA: Are his trousers off already then?
> ROSE: Not in my recollection—why?
> VIOLA: His long hairy legs.
> ROSE: The legs may be hairy and the trousers still be on, Poppy.
> POPPY *(who has been checking the text)*: When last seen his trousers were still on.

Rosemary Pountney's scholarly reason for quoting this material is "how little connects" its style with the chaste abstraction of the published text. Like Winnie in *Happy Days* scrutinising Willie's dirty postcard with great interest, only to pronounce it "Genuine pure filth", her strategy throughout this book is to examine Beckett's foul papers merely for the purpose of showing "how little" they have to do with a finished product from which the "wealth of filthy circumstance", in the words of *Molloy*, has been pared away.

The "essential" idea which is thus distilled is "fully guaranteed genuine pure" (like the bristles of Winnie's toothbrush) by the "filth" it has transcended. Far from having little to do with the supposed purity of the finished product, the earlier relatively impure stages have everything to do with it: the end-product can only be disclosed as illimitably significant against a background of such discarded "limiting detail". In other words, the claim that the plays are "immediate . . . essences" can only be mediated through a wealth of circumstantial detail.

So we must witness Beckett in various states of textual undress as Rosemary Pountney traces his working method as one in which Beckett divests himself of such "unmemorably evident" detail as the above scene "in the interests of ambiguity". The striptease goes too far, though, for eventually all that remains is "a skeleton which the audience can flesh out for itself", and which therefore leaves everything to the imagination. Never has the "brain-on-a-stick" view of Beckett received such apparent support from scholarship. It is not uncommon, however, for critics to come this close to openly regarding Beckett's work as mere inkblots where any meaning can be seen—as if, when he spoke of his work as "a stain upon the silence", he were to be taken literally.

The usual justification for such books is that they strengthen the basis for interpretative criticism. Rosemary Pountney's intention, on the contrary, appears to be to cut the ground from under the feet of interpretation. "It is typical of Beckett's drafts to move from a narrow interpretation towards a wider one" by means of "exhaustive . . . self-analysis", she writes. The assumption is that the Beckettian creative process is so complete as to foreclose the possibility of interpreting its product. Because the plays have already exhaustively interpreted themselves, all further analysis or




[2] *Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama 1956-76*. By ROSEMARY POUNTNEY. Colin Smythe/Barnes & Noble, £19.50.

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interpretation is an irrelevancy—at best a polite veil, at worst a shroud for the bones of the dramatic skeleton.

Rosemary Pountney seems to imply that interpretation is futile—as if the critic who betrays himself could somehow succeed in being faithful to Beckett and thus escape the situation described by Nadeau. But despite (or, rather, because of) this, she is not averse to offering her own interpretations. Since it is claimed that there is no definitive interpretation, she can, in a move typical of Beckett criticism, present her own interpretations as being quite as good as any other.

What is of interest about her interpretations is the way in which they reintroduce the "unmemorably evident", and are seemingly derived from a book of the same quality as the one Poppy reads in the early *Come and Go*: "There is nothing left for these women but rue for the love that has passed them by" because "The husbands of the early drafts have gone". ("It should not be clear what they are sitting on", specifies the text of *Come and Go*. But it is quite clear in Pountney's interpretation that they are sitting on the shelf.) All Beckett's characters are perceived to be in various ways lovelorn. "In *Ghost Trio* the woman F loves has become a melody", *Nacht und Träume* is merely about "A's yearning for the benediction received from beloved hands in the past". These skeletons seem to be curiously nostalgic for their flesh.

*Theatre of Shadows,* which "both defines and takes as its subject" the supposed middle period of Beckett's drama, is unaware of how in more fundamental respects it may itself be responsible for creating the subject it takes Beckett's creative process to be. Rosemary Pountney draws a comparison between this process and the kind of literary purification rite which many critics find to be enacted in the development of Beckett's work as a whole. It "distinguishes itself from the apes" or from the "aping" which is the lurid realism of Beckett's early work, "and rises gradually towards the light" of pure abstraction (like Malone's reflections on the loss of his stick). But she does not ask herself whether this consensus as to Beckett's overall development may have affected the way in which she interprets the evolution of the drafts.

AGAIN, POUNTNEY BELIEVES that the Yeatsian notion of "dreaming back" is a central theme of Beckett's: "after death the human spirit was destined to dream back through its life. Gradually the skein of life would be unwound until a state of innocence was reached." But, as one observes her dreaming back through the skeins of Beckett's drafts, lifting them away one by one until the essence is unveiled, to remain forever "innocent" of critical interpretation, one begins to suspect that the concept of dreaming back is more useful for interpreting her own activity than Beckett's, and that it is she who has dreamed up the relevancy of this concept to Beckett's drama.

Finally, one concludes that she can claim that Beckett's plays are abstract essences only because she herself has abstracted them from all contexts but that of their own evolution. That is, it is only because she has already assumed that Beckett's plays are, in his own phrase, "abstracted to death" as mere "skeletons"—are already, as it were, in the literary "beyond"—that she can then dream back through their previous lives in earlier drafts, and represent these (while purporting to objectively present them) as stages in a process of successive refinement.

Beckett's supposed creative process thus becomes an allegory of Pountney's critical procedure. A book which claims to describe the process by which Beckett plays came to be written in fact uses them to describe the process by which the critic attained belief in them as entities immune to critical interpretation, and a representation of them as "ineffables" is smuggled in as a stark presentation of "the facts". It is Pountney, not Beckett, who reduces his plays to "the essence of an idea".

THE CREATIVE PROCESS which Rosemary Pountney's book has the great merit of allowing us to glimpse is quite different from the ritual she takes it to be. It is closer to Beckett's description (reported by Gottfried Büttner) of the creative act as one in which form and content are indistinguishable. Not simply a process in which the aloof artist successively pares away the fingernails of a preconceived, preordained form until it is refined out of existence, but one in which, while concrete detail is "vaguened", the abstract shape is at the same time particularised. Pountney may be right in detecting a tendency towards abstraction in Beckett such as *The Unnameable* saw, and repudiated, in himself: "The thing to avoid is the spirit of system." As her book demonstrates, the spirit of system, divorced from the body of contingent particulars, is invisible. Between the lines of this study we see Beckett struggling against "the mania for symmetry" (in the words of Molloy)—a mania which Beckett's less successful works, such as *Quad,* succumb to—while he strives to impose form on the mess. In an oxymoronic phrase, Beckett declared in a letter to Jack MacGowran, quoted in Jordan R. Young's engaging biography of that great Irish actor, that he was no "purist bastard".[3]

*Theatre of Shadows* is inevitably of great interest for the amount of hitherto unpublished material it has assembled. But such material does not affect our interpretation of the plays as they stand—and would not do so even if Rosemary Pountney had not already ruled out of court such circumstantial evidence by locating the value of the plays precisely in their ability to rise above such "limiting detail". In the absence of any answer to the question of what, in that case, is the value of tabulating such details, fascinating though they may be, one can only pronounce Pountney's album of *rejectamenta* to be, in Beckett's double-sided description of memory, a "treasure bin".

Beckett speaks in *Proust,* of the "monster or Divinity" comprised of habit, time, and memory. If, in *Theatre of Shadows*, Beckett is apotheosised as a kind of literary divinity, from Nicholas Zurbrugg's *Beckett and Proust*[4] he

[3] *The Beckett Actor: Jack MacGowran, Beginning to End.* By JORDAN R. YOUNG. Apollo Press, £14.95.

[4] *Beckett and Proust.* By NICHOLAS ZURBRUGG. Colin Smythe/ Barnes and Noble, £19.50.

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emerges as a kind of monster—whose three heads are "'dud' mysticism, pessimism and negative relativism". Zurbrugg's strategy is to take Proust as the paradigm of the life-enhancing artist, so that Beckett's supposed rejection of what Zurbrugg calls "Proustian values" can be shown to be a life-denying negation of *all* values. For example, the passage in *A la recherche du temps perdu* where Marcel and his grandmother communicate through the partition separating their hotel rooms by means of *"trois petit coups"* is taken as an example of "successful gestural communication" and compared, ingeniously, to Molloy getting in touch with "the ruined and frantic understanding" of his mother by teaching her a simple code of raps on the skull.

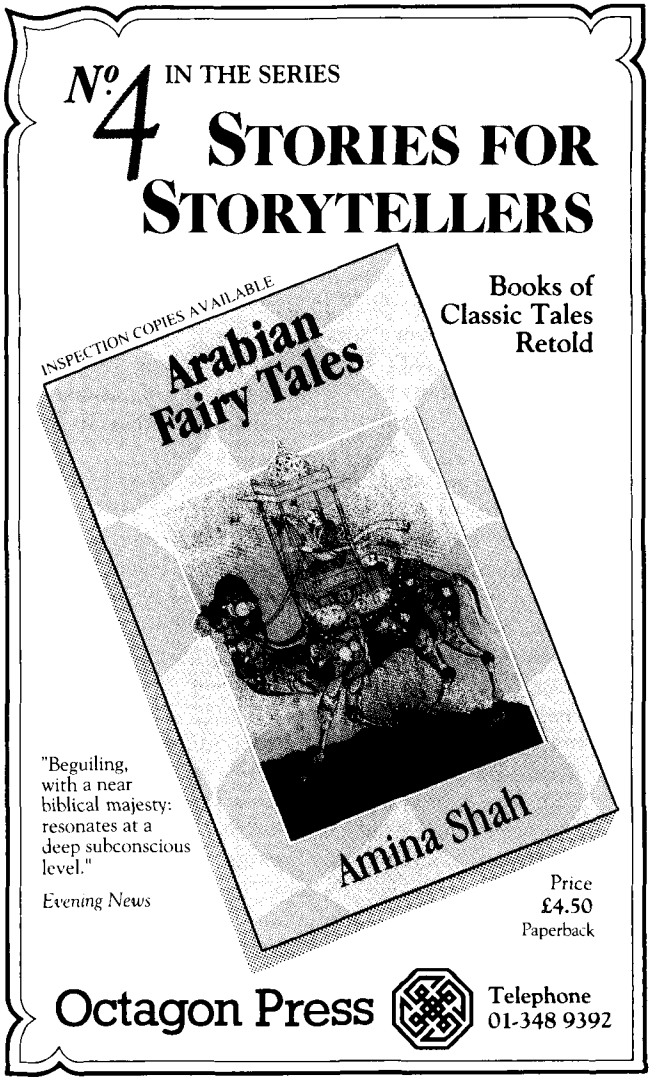
Such a policy of trial by comparison, evincing an unwillingness to confront Beckett on his own territory, or no-man's-land, sorts oddly with Zurbrugg's statement that Beckett's work "necessitates definition in its own terms". Moreover, once it has been commenced, there is no end to this game of spotting Beckettian reversals of "Proustian values". Is the scene where Marcel resurrects his grandmother's and his own dead selves, while stooping to unbutton his boot, parodied by the opening of *Waiting for Godot* where Estragon, struggling to pull off *his* boot, conjures up Vladimir and with him, apparently, Estragon himself?

> VLADIMIR: I thought you were gone forever.
> ESTRAGON: Me too.

Is the Beckettian boot always merely on the other, non-Proustian, foot? Must the doss-house cup of tea and slice of "sodden bread" refused by Molloy with a "convulsive thrust of both hands" always be an emblem of Beckett's rejection of the Proustian *madeleine* and the "exquisite pleasure" Marcel takes in his tea-consecrated cake? Zurbrugg might as well have said so. That photograph of Marcel's grandmother taken just before her death—in which a magnificent hat cannot disguise the fact that she "wears an expression of an animal that feels it has been marked down for slaughter"—is this parodied by Malone's photograph of an ass, in a boater, standing miserably "at the edge of the ocean"?

SUCH QUESTIONS are difficult to answer, because there is often a complex network of parodic relationships within Beckett's works. Thus Malone's photograph of the ass recalls Macmann's photograph "or rather daguerrotype" of his deceased Moll in which "she pressed her lips together in order to hide her great buck teeth". And this in turn sends us back to the "wreathed lips, enormous teeth" of the mule slaughtered by Mr Lambert in the same novel. The "source" for all this may be the photograph of Marcel's grandmother and her slaughterhouse face. But Beckett never simply photographically reproduces such sources, or rather he does *photographically* reproduce them—in the sense that a copy of a photograph (such as Malone's "copy" of Marcel's, and Macmann's "copy" of Malone's) is at the same time another original. In being drawn up into a closed circuit of interior relations and analogues, Beckett's very borrowings attain (as Beckett said of Bram van Velde) an "incoercible absence of relation" to their originals, even as they demand that we trace such relations.

Zurbrugg, however, coerces Beckett's work into a relation of negative to the Proustian positive. He does not do justice to the dual nature of the Beckett text—noted, for one, by David Hayman in *Beckett Translated/Translating Beckett*[5]—which consists in their being strewn with fragments from previous literature (not just Proust, but everybody) which create expectations which they then do not fulfil. Rather than being merely frustratingly negative, such "evidence of the struggle with convention . . . is a central source of reader enjoyment against the grain of a uniformly dreary and uncompromisingly honest vision". But Zurbrugg, having no sense of this tension, speaks as if it were possible for Beckett to invert Proustian values without at the same time invoking them. Surprisingly for the editor of the literary magazine *Stereo Headphones*, he produces a univocal or monaural interpretation of Beckett as simply negative, deaf




[5] *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett*. Edited by ALAN WARREN FRIEDMAN, CHARLES ROSSMAN and DINA SHERZER. Pennsylvania State University Press, $24.95, £19.95.

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to all positive value—merely the anti-Proust. Preconceived assumptions of Beckett's "unswerving misanthropy", "obdurate gloom", "inconsolable pessimism" reduce the complex issue of the nature and extent of Proust's influence on Beckett to a relation of simple opposition.

To adapt his own language, it seems that Zurbrugg, having read too much Proust and not enough Beckett, is suffering from a "bad case of textual indigestion". So that with him it is not so much the "lenitive" but the laxative of comment which simplistically reduces the Beckettian world view—in contrast to the Proustian *"vie en rose"*—to *"la vie en merde"*. Zurbrugg has much to learn from the "brave little light" (Beckett's phrase) of Valerie Topsfield's comment in *The Humour of Samuel Beckett,*[6] that "It is a *sine qua non* of the Beckett hero that he should not only survive, but have an imaginative and positive approach, however wretched his existence." The apparently blackly negative attitude of Beckett's heroes often functions as a positive mode of survival.

THE RESULT of Zurbrugg's negative approach is a series of "grotesquely reductive" (his phrase) misreadings of Beckett's work. For example he takes W's "Fuck life!" at the end of *Rockaby* to be representative of the Beckett protagonist's utter negativity. But, in the terms established by the play, this statement is not so simplistically life-denying. The whole action of *Rockaby*—W rocking back and forth in the "mother rocker"—is in a sense a gathering of momentum for the emission of this final expletive. In this context, the words "Fuck life!" are made to enact something of their literal, positive, meaning. W throws back in the face of life the imperative which, in the absence of "another living soul", she has been unable to obey; and in this way seems, curiously, finally to satisfy it. Zurbrugg sees here a mere "banality"—but, even when taken out of context, the words "Fuck life!" conceal an affirmation within an apparent negation.

That passage in *Company* where, "numb with the woes of your kind", the eyes of the sleepless narrator "light on the watch . . . and follow round and round the second hand now followed and now preceded by its shadow" is cited by Zurbrugg as an example of the escapist tendency of Beckett's characters. Such passages—according to Zurbrugg—prove that the Beckett hero does not, as critics have almost unanimously supposed, seek the core of himself; on the contrary, he is attempting to distract himself from the reality of his situation. For Zurbrugg, the Beckettian aesthetic is mere anaesthetic. But the irony of that passage is that it is not a distraction from, but a very precise image of, the time-bound "woes of your kind"; and this is brought home to us at the end of the section (not quoted by Zurbrugg), when "The sun shines on you . . . and flings all along the floor your shadow and that of the lamp left lit above you".

The woes of the narrator of *Company* are that, flat on his back in the dark, he yearns for a "second hand" (who comes in the form of the voice speaking to him in the second person); that his time is always shadowed by memories of the past, his future a meeting again or catching up with past time. Zurbrugg fails to realise that such attempted distractions are always, in Beckett, unsuccessful; they have the effect of increasing awareness of the condition from which they are meant to afford relief. Beckett is not sloppy enough to incorporate mere narrative distractions into his work. Rather, as he said in a letter regarding *Murphy*:

> "There is no space in such a book for *mere* relief. The relief also has to do work and reinforce that from which it relieves."

The relief is always a putting into relief, a highlighting.

ANOTHER STRATEGY by which Beckett's narrators, according to Zurbrugg, evade the core and flee to the surface is by indulging in what Beckett called "the miserable statement of line and surface", "the penny-a-line vulgarity" of "literary geometry". As an example of such "wallowing" in line and surface Zurbrugg cites *Imagination Dead Imagine,* where "Two diameters at right angles AB CD divide the white ground into two semi-circles". Beckettian surfaces, however, are always deceptive. If Zurbrugg had paused to consider that these letters also divide the "white ground" (misquoted as "whole ground") of human history, he might have avoided the excruciating pun he inadvertently makes by mentioning this as an example of Beckett's "excruciatingly detailed descriptions".

As an example of the Beckett hero's "centrifugal fear of self", Zurbrugg mentions Murphy's "experience" that the search "should be stopped before the deeper coils were reached". "It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this passage", says Zurbrugg, since it proves that Murphy is not engaged in a quest for deep consciousness, as critics have supposed, but "recoils towards the macrocosm". But it is only if you think of the self as a static entity waiting to be discovered that Beckett's characters can be said to evade it when they recoil. The experience of Beckett's quest-heroes is that the self is not to be thought of in such a way. The whole point of the search for self is to demolish a simplistically Zurbruggian notion of the self as a monster lurking in the depths from which one "beats a hasty retreat". Murphy, of course, does not retreat from self but from the spectacle of "Scraps of bodies, of landscapes, hands, eyes, lines and colours evoking nothing"—that is, from the Rimbaudian or, for Zurbrugg, "Burroughsian vista" of the obliteration of identity.

ZURBRUGG'S AUTHOR OF "the deeper coils" is William Burroughs—of whom it may well be said, as Zurbrugg is wrong to say of Beckett, that (in Molloy's phrase) he leads us "headlong into the shit". Burroughs is an author who has gone off Murphy's rocker, abandoning the oscillation between light and dark, in order to explore "the deeper coils". As Burroughs puts it in *Port of Saints,* "lost marbles in the room three ampules morphine". If

[6] *The Humour of Samuel Beckett.* By VALERIE TOPSFIELD. Macmillan, £29.50.

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Proust is Zurbrugg's author of the positive, Burroughs is his guru of the authentically negative. In terms of the light-dark eschatology established between the lines of *Beckett and Proust,* Beckett is condemned for neither satisfactorily exploring the light of the outer world, nor the dark of the inner; but rather for wavering between them, or (like Belacqua in the unpublished *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*) retreating from both to the realm of the simply "not" and "neither". In Zurbrugg's book, Proust and Burroughs crucify Beckett between them, but this time both thieves go to heaven. Proust's reputation is affirmed and Burroughs's saved, while Beckett is damned for being neither Proust nor Burroughs. The critic plays Old Testament God, staging a morality play with literary puppets.

ZURBRUGG'S interpretation of Beckett is based largely upon its "extracircumferential phenomena"—jettisoned, unpublished, uncollected, and occasional writings, marginalia. The depravity of Zurbrugg's appetite for such *rejectamenta,* to paraphrase Murphy, is considerable. He invariably "revisits the vomit" (in the words of the unpublished story "Echo's Bones"), dealing in the "petty cash" of Beckett's work. In this he behaves exactly as he accuses Beckett of doing, evading the core of this writer's achievement by fleeing to its periphery, and evincing a centrifugal fear of Beckett. Hence he produces an interpretation which is itself marginal and to be rejected. In the final analysis, *Beckett and Proust,* like *Theatre of Shadows,* offers a striking example of the process Beckett spoke of in *Proust,* by which "The observer infects the observed".

Beckett was haunted by a statement Jung made in a lecture of 1931—that one of his patients had "never been properly born". Beckett criticism, too, never gets properly born; it invariably regresses to a stage in which the distinction between subject and object is blurred. "Was it then I was—fleshed?"—a character in an early draft of *Play* remembers the moment when he was romantically trapped. (As he was then successfully poached, so now he is poaching in hell.) It appears that Beckett critics cannot flesh out Beckett's work without fleshing it in a "plausible concatenation" (Beckett's phrase) of their own making, that what Beckett called "the power of the text to claw" resides precisely in its ability to lift itself free of the clutches of criticism—or at least of that kind of criticism which wants to lead us up the garden paths of "the culture park" (in the words of *Watt*) by peddling some myth of total explanation. (This is perhaps the reason why the best Beckett criticism is to be found in essays and short monographs.)

It is my own view that Beckett's work has seemed impenetrable because he is a different kind of writer from what has been supposed. Much of his work is of a complexity comparable to Joyce's later prose, requiring careful exegesis before any conclusions can be drawn. We will come out of the forest. But, as Maurice Nadeau said, "It will take years".

# Poet of the Pressure Group

## *Joyce Cary's Myth—By* JENNIFER RAMAGE

"SOME DAY I shall write an enormous book", wrote Joyce Cary to his wife from Africa in 1919. "It will be a dense book. A forest of a book, full of good timber, and bad timber, and old bogs, and swamps, and rocks, and unexpected streams, and grateful springs and frightful blasted heaths, where the bones of countless readers bleach among barren wastes. I shall be damned for this book. And then countless champions will spring up to defend it."

His words were prophetic. His novels are all chapters in this "enormous book"—to which he thought of giving the overall title *The Comedy of Freedom,* after Balzac. As he predicted, he has often been damned for this work—most recently by a *Times* critic, Peter Ackroyd, who on Cary's centenary last year described him as a writer "of middling talent, who never quite made it to major," and rashly predicted that "few people will be reading his novels in future years".

But Cary has also had his champions springing to defend him, from fellow-novelists like V.S. Pritchett, Graham Greene, Doris Lessing, to critics like Bernard Levin—"To find a novelist who saw more deeply and conveyed more truly you have to go back to Dostoievsky and Tolstoy, Balzac and Goethe, Mann and Hesse".

Why should Cary's reputation have remained so controversial? Alan Bishop in his sympathetic centenary biography, *Gentleman Rider,*[1] reviews some of the reasons which have been put forward: above all, that his moral stance is hard to pin down—as one critic said, ". . . you don't know where to have him".

[1] *Gentleman Rider: A Biography of Joyce Cary.* By ALAN BISHOP. Michael Joseph, £16.95.

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Cary himself foresaw this difficulty. "My work does not reveal any subjective centre", he wrote. "It deals as far as I can manage it with the whole landscape of existence; and though that landscape is seen from one point of view, the especial nature of the point of view does not appear in the books." As with Browning's Pope in *The Ring and the Book*:

> *Truth nowhere lies, yet everywhere in these—*
> *Not absolutely in a portion, yet*
> *Evolvable from the whole.*

Cary leaves the imaginative work of reconciliation to his reader—and so evokes as many different imaginative responses as he has readers.

Cary's special point of view was a long time in the forging. He studied both painting and law in Paris, Edinburgh and Oxford, and served in Nigeria and the Cameroons, as both administrator and soldier, before retiring from the African service to devote his time to fiction. The experience of Africa sharpened the political interests he had had even as a boy, growing up in an Anglo-Irish family deeply affected by political events at the end of the 19th century.

Alan Bishop covers this period sensitively, although much of the material is familiar to readers of Malcolm Foster's and Andrew Wright's earlier biographies. But he is to be congratulated on the fullest life of Cary that has yet appeared, with many new insights into Cary's literary development. It is fascinating to learn, for instance, that in writing *Prisoner* (1952), Cary drew upon Robert Graves's book about Milton's wife, as well as on the diary of Dostoievsky's wife. (There is one small yet important error: Chester Nimmo is not murdered at the end of *Not Honour More*, but dies of natural causes in a lavatory.)

CARY spent twelve years in study and apprenticeship, trying to make sense of his world before he could reflect it to his own satisfaction in fiction. Bishop gives an absorbing account of the influences, both literary and experiential, which helped to shape Cary's world in this period. He read and annotated Jung's *Symbols of Transformation* (known then as *Psychology of the Unconscious*), as well as Frazer's *Golden Bough*; various philosophers and political theorists; and, perhaps the most lasting influence, William Blake, of whom he wrote:

> "Blake is for me the only philosopher, the only great poet, who had a real understanding of the nature of the world as seen by an artist: that is to say, the world of the individual, unique person, the unique thing. The world, of course, is as much a unity as a collection of individualities, that is the fundamental problem for all systematic philosophers, as it is for religion. And for Blake its unity is that of a character, a harmony of particulars. . . ."

Blake introduced him "into a highly complex universe where what is called material is entirely dissolved into imaginative construction and states of feeling, where matter, mind and emotion become simply different aspects of one reality".

Cary's world is also one of individual freedom. Cary's use of the word "freedom" is his own: by it he means, not absence of restraint, but the creative power in man—the power to produce novelty in the world.

In his notes to *Power In Men* (written for the Liberal Book Club in 1939, and resulting in an invitation to stand as a Liberal candidate for Parliament, which he declined), Cary elaborates his idea of this creative power.

> "Some doubt the possibility [of freedom]. They do not see how it can exist in a world where everything is caused by something else . . . . What we see in the real world is a continuous rearrangement of material. The sculptor does not change the marble; he carves it. The inventive mind continuously makes new things out of old materials."

THE PERENNIAL conflict in Cary's world is therefore between the free imagination and the forms of order which imagination itself has created. From his working notebooks we learn that the germ of a book comes to him almost always in the form of a trial: Gulley Jimson and Sara are both writing their stories in prison; Wilcher and Chester Nimmo have been in trouble with the police; Mister Johnson and Charley are also up against the law. But the trial is never the trial of the guilty by the innocent: it is the trial of the innovator by the already incarnated. Thus every trial has a sacrificial aspect.

This conflict is most fully elaborated in the Jimson trilogy. But the narrative poem, *The Drunken Sailor* (1947) and its prose gloss form an introduction to the themes of the trilogy.

> "History . . . is driven by necessity creating from authority that dies, a new authority; from routine broken by war, a new routine; a new illusion of finality, of stability, in which minds are caught by their own realised dreams; when the very spirit of creation for all its restless striving forward which is the life of its life, congratulates itself upon its foresight, nods and dozes; until, grown impatient in idleness and disgusted by luxury, it perceives its own comfort as a stagnation and a death, requiring nothing of the mind's will, is hateful to the mind, and corruption to the spirit . . . .
>
> The word of imagination, once uttered, cannot be arrested by the police. It is the soul speaking to the soul in the depth of eternal life, corrupting all routine faith, all received idea, all material and complacent security, until suddenly the huge structure of an ancient and glorious empire falls down like a rotten cloth from old bones. For all states are states of the living imagination, all governments are forms of thought and passion, which, without continual recreation in the soul, are dead masks, hollow appearances . . . .
>
> The free soul can never rest content in the accomplished thing of art, church or government, but it soon turns from it with disgust in proportion to the fury and hope of its making . . . . And imagination by its very

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nature must find in all completion a gaol, in all conclusion a grave."

This theme is pursued throughout *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) with its counterpoint of the visionary poems of Blake. Gulley moves in and out of prison in the course of the book. As Carey wrote in an unpublished note: "The world of reality which he cannot escape is at once the material out of which he must build and the force which destroys him."

Gulley is a kind of cosmic tipster: his tips, we are reminded, come straight from the horse's mouth. A remark of Cary's about the French title is characteristic. In answer to a suggestion that *The Horse's Mouth* was popular because it was less philosophical than his other work, he commented: "*The Horse's Mouth* is a very heavy piece of metaphysical writing. No, they like it because it is funny. The French have detected the metaphysics and are fussing about the title. I want *'le tuyau increvable'*—the unbustable tip. They say this is unworthy of a philosophical work and too like a *roman policier*. I say *tant mieux*."

If Gulley is a tipster, Sara is a trickster, using art for the purposes of love and creation, as well as for chicaneries involved in the feathering of her nest. There is an orchid which bears an imitation of a female bee at its entrance, thus attracting, by deceit or art, the male bee whose attentions it requires for its pollination. Throughout the natural world there are these arts or deceits by which life seeks to renew or preserve itself; as Sara, with her artist's instinct (so natural to women as scarcely to be recognised as such), adopts a graceful posture, or worries about her child Nancy's teeth: " . . . for you can't forget a child's teeth . . . when she's a girl and has no advantages . . . . My idea was that if I could save them till she was twenty-five or six, I would have six or seven years to get her married."

CARY'S WORLD is shot through with art, working in the trivial as well as in the sublime; for it is important to his conception of the world that "art" has the widest possible interpretation. In *Art and Reality* (1956) he wrote:

> "In common discourse the word is used freely . . . of any kind of activity from cooking to hairdressing. Journalism is an art, and so is pleading in a law court, speaking in parliament. I am choosing the widest definition . . . because it seems to me the only true and significant one . . . I am defining art as the means, and almost the only means, by which we can express ourselves in forms of meaning and communicate these meanings to others."

In his way, Wilcher, the lawyer of *To Be A Pilgrim* (1942), is also an artist: he is the conservative man, the preserver and re-creator (for Vishnu, the preserver, is also a god). In a note for this novel, Cary wrote: "the conservative . . . has to *recreate, to maintain* . . . you can be a passive conservative, a mere parasite, or a creative maintainer." Wilcher strives to be a creative maintainer, but he is weighed down by his love of the past and its creations:

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> "On summer days like this in harvest, the richness of the ground seems charged upon the air, so that even the blue of the sky is tainted like the water of a cow pond, enriched but no longer pure. It is as if a thousand years of cultivation have brought to all, trees, grass, crops, even the sky and the sun, a special quality belonging only to the very old countries. A quality not of matter only, but of thought; as if the hand that planted the trees in their chosen places had imposed upon them the dignity of beauty appointed; but taken from them, at the same time, the innocence of natural freedom."

It is a pain in his heart to see the Tolbrook trees cut down by his nephew, who is modernising the estate. Yet he is a man whose soul can accept transition, since his religious feeling tells him that what has died is not to be finally separated from what is being born; for death and birth are but rearrangements of the same material. This intuition is notably expressed in the passage in which the old man resigns himself to his nephew's plan to house the new threshing-machine in the Adam drawing-room at Tolbrook:

> "The huge machine, like a species of Roman siege engine, towers in the middle of the floor, driven by a tractor among the broken laurels . . . . Behind Farley, who is feeding to Robert on the top of the machine, I see . . . a rural trophy in plaster of delicate scythes and sickles, sheaves and hayforks, tied up in pale blue ribbon . . . . The grinning and horned Pan, who, in white marble, plays upon his syrinx, under one end of the magnificent mantelshelf . . . carries upon one horn a labourer's luncheon . . . and round his waist, mixed with the marble flowers and grasses, hangs a bunch of real onions on a string. The whole building, floors, walls, and roof, shakes and thunders . . . . I sit in the armchair, last of the drawing-room furniture; and the very ruin of this beautiful room is become a part of my happiness. I say no longer (Change must come, and this change, so bitter to me, is a necessary ransom for what I keep). I have surrendered because I cannot fight and now it seems to me that not change but life has lifted me forward on the stream."

The passage recalls those in *The Horse's Mouth* in which Jimson obliterates old paintings in order to use the canvas for his new idea: the theme is again that of sacrifice and renewal. The trilogy can be read as a poetic hymn to the resurrection of the body (or, if you prefer, to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva). Cary has often been claimed for the nonconformist tradition, but his is a religion more ancient and more universal than English nonconformism.

CARY DEVELOPED these themes further in his political trilogy. His ideas about politics are set out in two non-fiction works, *Power in Men* (1939) and *The Process of Real Freedom* (1943). They form a valuable background to his political novels, which have been particularly undervalued and misread. "The argument of this book", he writes in *Power in Men*, "is not that governments are normally bound to do certain things for the sake of liberty. It is: 'Because liberty is a certain kind of free power in man, governments must do certain things or be broken'."

This creative power is increased by education and the acquisition of craft or industrial skill. The English, Cary felt, are politically gifted because they have such a strong awareness of it and are skilled in shaping government to suit it:

> "The typical Briton prefers to collaborate with human nature in its known needs, [rather] than try to change it into something more amenable to reason and more obedient to the police . . . . Every modern state, liberal or despotic, that organises for production puts more power into the hands of the people . . . . Thus real liberty [i.e. creative power in men] grows, and with it, either hidden or open, real democracy. It may not show itself for a long time. It disappears from the politics of the day and politicians forget it, despise it, or ask if it will ever be seen again . . . but it is always there."

Long before it was fashionable, Cary was interested in the rise of pressure-group democracy, which he felt had not yet found its political philosopher. "Most people when they speak of democracy imagine it as representation by vote . . . . But meanwhile we have seen a new kind of representation growing up alongside the old." One man is not wholly represented by any one pressure group, but can belong to many, representing not only his trade but his tastes, interests, and opinions. Thus, ". . . it is as though for every man or woman, there existed in London a creature modelled to the likeness of that man or woman, in all his whims and cranks, but magnified by thousands and millions to a giant size".

THIS SYSTEM is "far more truly representative of real men, in their actual differences of character and opinion, than any former method. It has not been invented. It has grown up from below. It has forced its way to power through the heaviest barriers; like a tree that splits pavements and throws down walls." This form of government is, in Cary's view, one that must develop in time in all states:

> "Freedom [i.e. creative power in men] is always tending towards such a government; if it could be driven back, throughout the world . . . it would begin again at once, by the same means, to approach the same goal. It would form secret unions, secret cells . . . . It would exert upon hostile systems the pressure of millions of wills . . . until its ends were reached. And those ends would again be what we see now, the direct representative power of free association in the state."

It was his view that the same processes would, in time, force the international groups to the same accommodations as the internal groups.

All the arts of persuasion which we see being developed to an unprecedented degree (lobbying, public relations, advertising, media) and the pressure groups which use these arts, are the only alternative to violence—for, as Cary wrote in the German preface to *Not Honour More* (1955),

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". . . to govern any people, you must either shoot or persuade them".

Chester Nimmo, therefore, was not conceived as a crook or a hypocrite (as some critics have complained when objecting to Cary's "anti-moralism"). The leadership of the group "attracts or produces a special kind of man". For he represents the group's egoism, its will to gain or fear of loss; and "in the group this is necessarily writ larger than in the individual". The pressure-group leader "enlarges for each man . . . the force of his opinion and the ferocity of his judgment. He gives him a clearer *form*". This is equally true of a group designed to represent our altruism, such as a church. In the posthumous and unfinished. *The Captive and the Free* (1959), Preedy, we are told in an unpublished note, was conceived as "a study of the pressure group mind": this is also true of Chester Nimmo.

THE PRESSURE-GROUP theme runs throughout the political trilogy, from Nimmo's experiences as a young man in the founding of the trade union movement to the tragic resolution in the General Strike of 1926. As Pasternak's Zhivago is the poet of the Russian revolution, so Cary is the poet of the quieter English transformations of the period.

In Chester, Cary shows us the artist as manager of people (the character was suggested by Lloyd George, whom Cary much admired); in Jim Latter, the soldierly ideal of duty, truth; and in Nina, the human soul in its guilt torn between them.

Chester, in his imaginative creativity as politician, "must take a chance with his soul. He must to do his job", runs a working note for this trilogy. He and Nina "are moral victims of their task . . . . They corrupt each other but their 'corruption' is an occupational disease of experience." For they inhabit an old world which, like the cow-pond, is "enriched but no longer pure".

Jim, the soldier and Special Policeman, on the other hand, retains a primitive notion of "honour" which cannot absorb the complexities of real experience. Jim's narrative draws a masterly portrait of a man who in psychological terms is paranoid and schizoid: he sees things in black and white, people as either "scum, filth" or "the finest chaps who ever lived". To Jim, the democratic legal systems with their fallible devices for obtaining approximate truth, approximate justice, are nothing but "the raw racket", the "talky boys". Unable to value the arts of persuasion, he ends as an executioner.

*Not Honour More* presents a striking image of our tendency to project guilt on to scapegoats and assuage it by a blood-sacrifice. Nina begs Jim to remember "the real, true, everlasting truth"—a reference not so much to Christianity (for, as Nina writes, "you can never trust a christian *being* christian to be quite honest") as to the Everlasting Gospel of Blake: "If you avenge, you murder the divine image, and he cannot dwell among you; because you murder him he arises again, and you deny that he is Arisen, and are blind to Spirit." This is Nimmo's religion, as it is Nina's (and as it was Jimson's, expressed in the form "Cut your losses and start fair on Monday").


# POETRY REVIEW

**'Rapidly becoming the most authoritative, as well as the most handsome of magazines devoted to poetry' — P. J. Kavanagh, *Spectator***

*Poetry Review* has built a reputation in recent years both for its range and its no-nonsense reviewing of contemporary poetry. Over half of the magazine is usually prose—essays, interviews, news and views, as well as reviews. Most issue have an overall theme: Travel, Science, Education, Politics, Biography, etc.

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But Jim is quick to point out its weakness: for Nimmo uses it to justify the worst corruptions. "Nimmo tells you god is love . . . a god that doesn't need any principles, a god in the love racket."

This tension between justice and forgiveness—between ideal and imaginative morality—cannot be resolved, only lived with and struggled with, as Nina lives with Chester and Jim in her *ménage à trois* which is an ironic, ribald, yet profound image of the human soul in the duality of its moral needs.

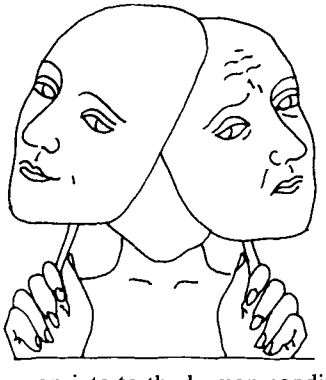
Cary's titles (*Prisoner of Grace, Except the Lord, Not Honour More*) are ironically layered, expressing at once the self-deceptions of the narrators, and the deeper values they so fallibly strive to pursue. For Cary was the supreme, the profound ironist. It seems to me that it is because his complex, ironic, moral vision is so original in both conception and expression, that Cary's novels have provoked among his critics that very conflict which the trilogy explores. The political trilogy needs to be published in one volume, like *Triptych* (Penguin, 1985). For it is only on completing all three books that we are enabled, through our own imaginative act, to experience the underlying unity of Joyce Cary's world.

In his special use of the trilogy Cary made a striking formal innovation in the history of the novel. A natural storyteller, he was also a master of characterisation through first-person narrative. It is perhaps his very skill at sustained narrative impersonation which has bedevilled his critics, so that they will complain of Wilcher's "sentiment", Jim's "confusion", or Nimmo's "crookedness", as though they are talking of Cary's own views. His range was astonishing: he impersonates both women and men, working-class and middle-class (the theme of class struggle is yet another strand in this endlessly resonant trilogy), and African as well as British.

You will not find heroes in Cary's novels; but if you are interested in the beginnings, sustainings, gradual corruptions, or transformations of persons, marriages, societies, houses, states of feeling—these you will find. The function of the novel, he wrote, "is to make the world contemplate and understand itself, not only as rational being but also as experience of value, as a complete thing". This was his aim and his achievement. He is a new age novelist who will surely find a wider audience as the turn of the century approaches.

# Out of Order

## *The Politics of Despair*—By DENNIS O'KEEFFE



REFLECTIVE PEOPLE who are dissatisfied with modern analytical philosophy or Marxism—or just plain anxious about the terrifying problems of today's world—will find David Levy's *Political Order*[1] imperative reading. Levy sets out to explain the nature, the inevitability, and the limitations of the political arrangements appropriate to the human condition, and does so in a beautiful and limpid prose. Those who are already convinced of the spiritual nature of man, or at any rate are sceptical of the shallow materialism underlying much of our contemporary intellectual culture, will be particularly grateful for his clear exposition of certain important German thinkers whose work has been neglected in favour of the disastrous and destructive nihilism of Jean-Paul Sartre or the empty, pretentious edifices of Louis Althusser.

Max Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann, and Arnold Gehlen get detailed treatment, and a long but highly compressed study of Eric Voegelin sets up good initial grounds for Levy's claim that here is the greatest political philosopher of our century. Inevitably there is deep disagreement as well as common ground among Levy's selected eminences. Gehlen, for instance, though anxious to combat crude and mechanistic notions of man, and insistent that "all is plastic and mobile", rejected as anthropomorphic (and therefore illegitimate) the contention that we need to attune our political order to some greater, transcendental order of things. Eric Voegelin, by contrast, was a Catholic to the deep core, and a Catholic metaphysics was crucial to his historiosophy. Such writers, it seems, are united on the less fundamental issues and in opposition on the larger ones—a condition distressingly familiar to anyone who is active today in dismembering the scientistic-socialist paradigm.

A central set of messages is drawn from these writers, and then cunningly distilled by Levy into a distinctive thesis of his own. There is a paradox of fixity and flux: we experience our condition as an ontological given, yet the cosmos is in endless movement. Each level in the hierarchy of being is older and slower in motion than the layer above—which it supports and makes possible, without determining it. We humans are dependent, for example, on successively inferior levels of more primitive consciousness below us; and at the same time significantly free of them. We—and perhaps only we—can grasp that it is only their immense time-scale which makes the lower strata seem eternal. And yet our lived con-

[1] *Political Order: Philosophical Anthropology, Modernity and the Challenge of Ideology*. By DAVID LEVY. Louisiana State University Press, $22.50, £18.00.

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dition is experienced as unchanging, for human nature is effectively a constant. We have to live socially, but in any complex society this human nature is necessarily more than social; it is political.

We cannot opt out of our political predicament; we inherit no instinctual repertoire to guide us in our political life. We must use language, reflection, and social negotiation. We are dependent on culture both individually and collectively. Levy puts it succinctly: ". . . even our organic needs are brought to consciousness in a cultured form." Our fundamental experience is mediated through culture, that is to say through history ("the specifically human mode of experience"), which is the enactment of culture in time.

Though David Levy does not put it in quite this way, his implicit view is that history has a delicate *mental* structure. From the imperatives of intellection are born not only spontaneous systems of order whose beauty and power excel anything else we know, and make us almost akin to gods; but also the constructionist errors and menacing Utopias of history. For ideas can be *wrong*. And this is the challenge of our worst modern illness—ideology, and what Levy refers to as "fantasies of revolutionary consciousness".

It is easy to mistake what we are and may be. Culture makes up our evolutionary deficit; it may also intoxicate us, shower us with false promises. The culture of the Enlightenment has done this, not only bemusing us with false, deterministic, theoretical systems; but in its dying convulsions throwing up voluntarist nightmare obsessions like those of Jean-Paul Sartre. Levy rightly rebukes Sartre for going beyond our bounded freedom. He does not mention the awesome political impact which Sartre's ideas have had—in some ways, the Third World is Sartre's idea and creation.

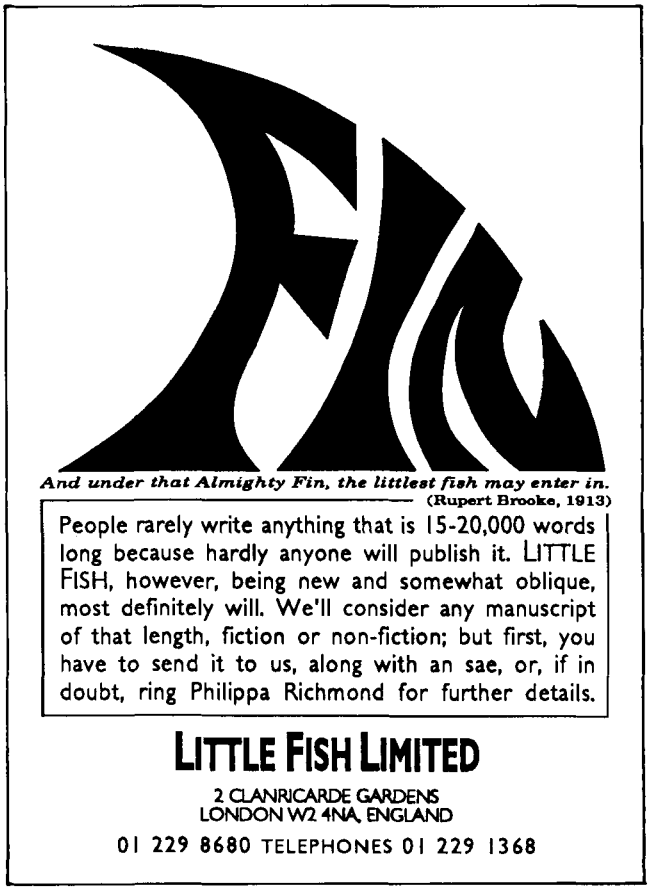
Our abiding problem is how to create a political order which is objectively functional to our material needs and subjectively satisfying to us. Does this anthropology collide with Levy's fundamentally Heraclitean philosophy? In fact there is no contradiction; it is a matter of perspective. A butterfly, Levy remarks, makes many living creatures seem almost eternal. For Levy, the trick seems to be to grasp simultaneously that there are parts of our nature which—like our need for friendship, family and law—cannot be transcended, while at the same time the transformative powers of modern technology have reduced nature to the status of a comparable and perishable institution.

It is here that Levy pulls his anthropology and his metaphysics into a coherent whole. With nuclear weapons, man acquired the ability to destroy or at any rate to rearrange catastrophically the fabric of the universe on which he depends. Prometheus now threatens the stable underpinning of his own life-world. The final achievement of evolution become-aware-of-itself is thus to have melted the distinction between the "is" of being and the "ought" of action.

THE THESIS IS compelling. Our civilisation does have a contempt for the real, an impious managerialism, a failure to observe that our scientific abilities greatly surpass our moral powers. I have some quarrel, nevertheless, with Levy's historical sociology. Like many conservatives, he coincides with contemporary neo-Marxists such as Jurgen Habermas in seeing our social order as crisis-torn. Society, as Levy describes it, is now inherently unstable: "The characteristic self-interpretation of modern man is radically flawed in a way that makes the attainment of a humanly satisfactory political order all but impossible."

IN THE pre-modern world, vital institutions—such as family and church—were "ontologised": attributed, through long experience, with virtually the same fixity as the material world. Discontents certainly flow from our modern impatience with restraints. The same powers that could terminate our small part of the universe have helped to arouse in us a sneering indifference to much which was once held sacrosanct. But I do not believe that it is mainly our technical powers which have eroded our spiritual foundations. It is our atheism and moral relativism—phenomena whose genesis it is probably impossible accurately to demonstrate —which most threaten us.

Nor do I accept Levy's thesis that thermonuclear extinction is the worst threat that we face. Is dying the worst that can befall a man? Any highly sentient being undergoing geometric cultural evolution must eventually negotiate the nuclear threshold. Would species-death be worse than, say, an Orwellian-type stasis, a closed system of wickedness stretching away forever, unchanging and unchangeable, truly an *ontologised* tyranny? Was this not the Nazi prospectus, and does it not remain the Communist one?

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Our paradox, our Janus-faced progress, is that history has taken us from political closure, compensated by religious faith and hope, to a political openness more than tinged with despair. Medieval Christendom was a harsh and coercive social world, much softened by a widely agreed spirituality. Our present dispensation involves a hitherto technically impossible economic integration, combined with an equally unprecedented and menacing spiritual apathy or cynicism.

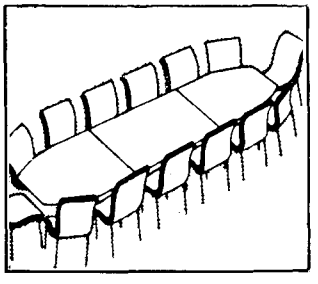
It is not clear how our present ills are to be resisted. Governments can, quite within the rule of law, reverse the inflation which is the main *economic* register of our moral "impatience" (as Levy dubs it), but direct moral ills are harder to confront. The cultural relativism and nihilism of our times are probably not direct products of capitalism and democracy, but rather offshoots of an accompanying, overweening rationalism. Some political leaders clearly wish to move against these ills, in defiance of atheistical bishops. But it is not clear that our political culture would allow this, or that it could be achieved without the erection of a most unattractive theocracy.

Religion is what is missing. Any society equipped with the technology of modern capitalism can create organic solidarity, in the sense of a network of mutually interdependent economic relations. Moral integrity—in the long run, the more important element in political order—is harder to achieve. It is the sense of wonder and mystery that has collapsed. The intellectuals, as Max Weber feared, have tipped our sense of the spiritual overboard. Careless intelligence has trivialised crucial institutions such as the family.

It is not so much the centre as the deep structure of culture which now cannot hold. The broken-hearted consciousness of our race cannot sustain an empty heaven; it cannot live blind to the strangeness and improbability of things. In this brilliant book, Levy moves inexorably towards a Catholic metaphysics. Like his hero Voegelin, he is close to Ortega y Gasset's majestic avowal that the real is only a special case of the fantastic.

# Strategy Shift

## *Planning for Post-War Defence—By* MAX BELOFF



DR JULIAN LEWIS has made an important contribution to the understanding of the origins of "the Cold War" and—perhaps even more important—underlined an object lesson in the inevitably contingent nature of all military and political planning, even within the relatively disciplined machinery of Whitehall. The period he deals with in *Changing Direction*[1] opens in 1942, when the British Government and the military were too busy trying to save and eventually win the War to have time or energy to spare to deal with what came next. Plans for the aftermath of war (which were left to the Foreign Office) had to cope both with the immediate requirements that would be placed upon the forces for occupation and other duties and with the transition to a more permanent posture. When the military and the defence scientists came into the business they had to take account of the new developments in military technology (and try to reckon how these might affect the waging of war) and of the gradual perception in the breakthrough towards atomic weapons of their role both as war-winners and as deterrents.[2] The penetration of vision in these respects of Sir Henry Tizard, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence, makes one understand more than ever why—despite his difficult personality—his advice was so eagerly sought.

The story in so far as it affects atomic weapons—and Dr Lewis corrects the official historian, Professor Margaret Gowing, on some important points—could not, even then, be dissociated from political attitudes. It is interesting that the services of Professor J. D. Bernal should have been employed, since his Communist sympathies were already patent; though of course his future career in Soviet-sponsored "peace" organisations could not have been foreseen. Professor P. M. S. Blackett, a scientist of great distinction who had made important contributions to the War effort, opposed the idea that Britain should possess her own atomic weapons and was certainly sympathetic to a more pro-Soviet line than became official policy.

During the period of Foreign Office control of the planning process, their enthusiasm for the wartime alliance with the Russians and the belief that it would continue in some form into the post-War period was absolute. The Big Three

[1] *Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-War Strategic Defence, 1942-1947.* By JULIAN LEWIS. Sherwood Press, £30.00.

[2] In an appendix Dr Lewis reprints an article originally published in ENCOUNTER in February 1982, in which Dr Lewis disposed of a story given currency by the BBC to the effect that Churchill was contemplating launching biological warfare against the Germans in 1944. It was worth having this to hand, since the story was revived five years later by an American historian (one Barton J. Bernstein) in the February/March 1987 issue of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists,* and summarised by *The Guardian*—keen as always to discredit Britain's heroes—in its issue of 9 January 1987. In an article in *Bulletin* in November 1987, Dr Lewis and Professor R. V. Jones (who contributes a foreword to the present volume) show that Professor Bernstein had ignored much of the published work on the subject, as well as important documentation available in the Public Record Office, while misinterpreting those that he did use.

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were to remain in charge, and no attempt was to be made to penetrate into questions of what the world might be like if the Soviet Union was to reveal a very different world-view and insist on a separate order of priorities. The military—concerned with capabilities and not with intentions—took a dissenting view.

Once Germany was defeated, nothing could prevent the Soviet armed forces from being the dominant factor in any European balance of power; and, even allowing for the likely lapse of time before the Russians recovered from their war losses, there could be no *a priori* reason for believing that they would not use their superiority to promote their own objectives. In practical terms, the differences were not so great as might at first sight appear, since what was needed to defend Britain and British interests against a revived Germany would also be needed if the Russians became hostile. Care was of course taken to prevent any public canvassing of the latter possibility, though what was in the minds of the British must have been known to the Russians since their spy, Donald Maclean, was in a key position as the Washington link with American planners.

After the end of the War, the impact of external events—particularly the imposition of Soviet-style governments in the wake of the Red Army's advances in Eastern Europe—caused an about-turn in the Foreign Office view, notably in the Northern Department which hitherto had been the principal opponent of any planning which assumed the Russians to be less than friends. It now became its view that the Soviet Union was guided primarily by an ideology to which the "Social Democracy" that seemed likely to prevail in Western Europe appeared as the major challenge. From 1945 to 1947 the civil and military planners found it relatively easy to work together, and by May 1947 there was an agreed defence plan looking to the sitution a decade ahead—by which time it was expected that the future pattern of world politics would be more clearly revealed. Although Western Union and NATO were still in the future, the need for Britain to have strong allies in Western Europe, the possibility that this might have to include the Germans, and above all the ultimate reliance on the United States's deterrent power were all clearly in view.

BEFORE ARRIVING at such a consensus, there were many difficulties to be overcome. In 1944, the talk was all of "the Commonwealth" as an entity from the defence point of view. By 1947, the extent to which it was ceasing to be or had already ceased to be such an entity was much more obvious. India as a major source of military and industrial strength would now have to be written off as likely at best to be a friendly neutral. Bases in north-west India (or what became Pakistan) could no longer be seen as available for part of Britain's air-deterrent. And hopes for the kind of control that Britain had assumed in the Middle East also seemed to be in jeopardy, with Britain's abandonment of the role of propping up Greece and Turkey and the handing over of Palestine's future to a United Nations decision.

From Dr Lewis's narrative it becomes clearer than has hitherto been the case how big a role the Middle East played in overall strategic thinking and not merely as the principal source of Britain's oil. Given the vulnerability of the British Isles to attack from the air—with or without atomic weapons—the important thing seemed to be to have other bases from which Russia itself could be threatened. Only the Eastern Mediterranean could provide them. From the point of view of the personalities involved, it is clear that Clement Attlee was only reluctantly persuaded of a strategy that involved a major commitment in this region. Holding on to the Middle East was above all Ernest Bevin's policy, and with the familiar consequences. Attlee seems to have thought that the position could probably not be held, and that the way to see Britain strategically was as the eastern outpost of a North American power centre. Bevin, like Churchill, still thought of the intersecting circles of Britain in Europe, the British Empire-Commonwealth, and the Anglo-American special relationship; Attlee was the first British Premier to be reconciled to bipolarity.

Dr Lewis's book is based upon a long and sustained study of the public records—some of which, despite all his efforts, are still unavailable. Although he has made some use of other papers and published biographical material, his book (like those of the "official historians") only rarely looks outside the world they reveal. And while he presents his material with a clarity not always to be found in doctoral theses—the book is based upon his own—he might have attracted the wider readership he deserves had he been a little less austere.

It was not only in the official mind that there was a "changing direction". In the last years of the War there was, for instance, a Chatham House study group on Soviet foreign policy which also witnessed the shift in opinion that he traces. I do not know if its records are available for study; certainly Dr Lewis does not refer to them. Out of that group there emerged, in any event, my own two-volume history of Soviet Foreign Policy, of which the first volume was published in 1947 and the second in 1949. It is not mentioned in Dr Lewis's bibliography, yet the last chapter would have given him a not altogether useless summary of the state of thinking at the end of the period with which he deals. Since it was for a generation the standard textbook of the subject both in Britain and in the USA, it may even have had some influence.

And lest this be thought of as a piece of special pleading, I would suggest that the changing views of more eminent scholars—Sir Lewis Namier, E. H. Carr, and Hugh Seton-Watson—must also be taken into account if the full scope of the debate is to be understood. Or does Dr Lewis think that soldiers and diplomats read only their colleagues' confidential memoranda?

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# Books Encountered

**Special Relationships: A Foreign Correspondent's Memoirs from Roosevelt to Reagan.** By HENRY BRANDON. Macmillan, £14.95.

Wonderfully gossipy, reasonably priced, 400-page cornucopia of Washington reminiscences by the veteran correspondent of the *Sunday Times* who retired in 1983. A Czech refugee from Hitler, he was so well-informed that some suspected him of spying: but his scoops were earned, like his reputation for shrewd wit.

**The Lives of Enoch Powell.** By PATRICK COSGRAVE. The Bodley Head, £16.00.

Intensely interesting study of a figure in some ways tragic—thwarted by his own integrity and forceful prose. The "River Tiber foaming with much blood" speech warned of difficulties unprepared for; opposition to EEC membership was logical and courteous; support for Ulster called for consistency. But in politics, fudge wins.

**Mary McCarthy: A Life.** By CAROL GELDERMAN. Sidgwick & Jackson, £15.00.

Comprehensive, sometimes faintly cloying biography written with its subject's authorisation (but not veto), and usefully supplementing the recent *How I Grew*. It's hard not to feel that someone so bright and energetic might have showed more sense at times: but the overall impression is of a celebration of zestful life.

**Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright.** By BRENDAN GILL. Heinemann, £20.00.

The author of *Here at the New Yorker* knows how to unearth a fact and turn a phrase. He deals sensitively with Wright's greatest tragedy—the death of his love in his blazing house—and with other family affairs. The countless photographs, well reproduced, compensate for the concentration on life, not architecture.

**Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature.** Edited by ELIZABETH C. GOLDSMITH. Pinter Publishers, £25.00.

Fourteen women, one man, brilliant on men (mostly) as women. Julia Epstein is witty and perceptive on *Fanny Hill* as subversive comedy; Patricia Meyer Spacks rescues Jane Austen's experimental *Lady Susan* from dismissal as juvenilia; James Carson sees *Clarissa* as self-critical; others study Alice Walker, Margaret Atwood, etc.

**Scribblers for Bread: Aspects of the English Novel Since 1945.** By GEORGE GREENFIELD. Hodder & Stoughton, £15.00.

Novelist, publisher, and agent (now retired from the last two roles) gives invaluable advice on Grub Street 1989: taking in best-sellers, agents, publicity, editors, book clubs, taxation, subsidiary rights, and massive changes in publishing, he combines experience and recent leg-work in a *vade mecum* every writer should own.

**Grace and Favour.** By JANE LAPOTAIRE. Macmillan, £12.95.

Touching double memoir of the author's childhood in two worlds: a warm, poor foster-mother in Suffolk, and her real mother's French-speaking household in Libya. The strains were great; but so were the ironies and insights. This true story reads like a well-observed novel, and contains surprise and comedy as well as pity.

**A Life in Letters.** By FELIX MENDELSSOHN. Edited by RUDOLF ELVERS. Translated by CRAIG TOMLINSON. Cassell, £14.95.

Mendelssohn wrote some 5,000 letters, most of them sparkling. Previous selections in English slightly bowdlerised them: this, which contains more than 120, concentrates especially on those to his family, some of them only recently discovered. The result is a delightful, bouncy narrative as alive as his precocious, prodigious music.

**Wisdom, Information, and Wonder: What is Knowledge For?** By MARY MIDGLEY. Routledge, £19.95.

Starting from the specialisation which leads to knowing more and more about less and less (until one knows everything about nothing), the author pleads for understanding, interdisciplinary communication, practicality and wisdom against the narrow accumulation of brute fact. But no summary can do justice to her acuity and range.

**James Mason: Odd Man Out.** By SHERIDAN MORLEY. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

Typically, it's uncertain which is title and which subtitle. But then Mason was enigmatic himself: a "handsome brute" with a voice like a pilot preoccupied by danger yet a conscientious objector; a fine actor yet never quite a star; a gentle, considerate man, yet deeply scary. Sheridan Morley expertly encompasses it all.

**Blood on the Nash Ambassador.** By ERIC MOTTRAM. Hutchinson Radius, £7.95.

A dazzling collection of essays on American popular culture by the Professor of American Literature at King's College, London. He investigates such matters as gun law, automobiles (especially in movies), fears of invasion, counter-culture, the retro mood, and so on. "Essays", with Mottram, implies research and statistics, not just literary musing.

**The East End: Four Centuries of London Life.** By ALAN PALMER. John Murray, £14.95.

Strangely unattractively printed, though with good photographs and chapter-head engravings, this is none the less a deeply researched and well-written history, relying more on Sidney-Webb-style sources than on literature: Mayhew does not even figure in the index, though Dickens does. The new docklands raise some disturbing questions.

**Imperialism and Juvenile Literature.** Edited by JEFFREY RICHARDS. Manchester University Press, £32.50.

An impudent price: but a fascinating set of ten essays, including the editor's introduction and "With Henty to Africa". Published in the "Studies in Imperialism" series, this might be expected to exude retrospective guilt or disapproval: but many of the contributors are either content to record the facts or covertly relish a nostalgic wallow. A common feature in work on popular culture, it seems.

**Give Them All My Love.** By GILLIAN TINDALL. Hutchinson, £11.95.

A challengingly ambitious novel, spanning several genres: mystery, historical novel, psychological thriller. Told in double flashback, it opens compellingly in a prison cell; then the prisoner is revealed as a former magistrate, weighed down by tragedy; then comes his youth in France, probing the Resistance. The knot is tightly tied—a slip-knot.

**Self-Consciousness: Memoirs.** By JOHN UPDIKE. André Deutsch, £12.95.

If you were expecting an autobiography, be warned: these are six separate "memoirs"—on Updike's home town, on his psoriasis, on his stammer, on Viet Nam, on ancestors, on religion, and on selfhood. All as elegant and fastidious as his critical writing, but without quite the energy of his fiction: he uses words as a veil as well as a confessional. Decorum is all? Well, a lot.

*R.M.*

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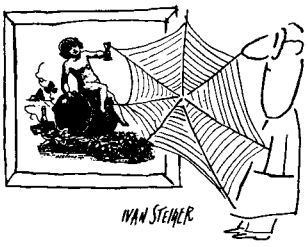
# CONTROVERSY

# Illusion & Delusion

## *Coup d'Etat at the V & A—By* DENYS SUTTON




FEW controversies in the art world in this country have been as extensive, as dramatic, and as serious in their implications as that provoked by the restructuring of the Victoria and Albert Museum. It has been widely covered in the British and American press, elicited protests from the staff of various foreign museums—notably that of the Metropolitan Museum, New York—as well as the British and German Museums Associations, given rise to questions in the House of Commons, and formed the theme for a notable debate in the House of Lords.[1]

By now, in fact, so much has been written and said about this drama that it is by no means easy to pick out its essential elements. The sad story more or less starts when the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons severely interrogated Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, on the adverse report by the National Audit Office about the state of the contents of the Museum. The report happens to have been grossly exaggerated: for instance, it claimed that many of the miniatures in the Museum were in a poor condition. But, as John Murdoch, the Keeper of the relevant department, pointed out in the *National Art-Collections Fund Magazine* last year, this is untrue: they are in sound order.

Paradoxically, although Mrs Esteve-Coll was understandably upset by the drubbing she received at the hands of the Committee, the charge levelled against the Museum, which received wide and adverse publicity, provided her with a weapon in her campaign for its "reform". It permitted her to launch her claim that "housekeeping" should receive priority. The suggestion gained currency that the general state of the Museum was to a large extent due to the behaviour of "the barons"—the Keepers of Departments who were supposedly locked in interdepartmental rivalry and absorbed in their private work to the exclusion of all other matters.

Obviously, as with any large organisation which has existed for many years, improvements can be made. However, the public should realise that the structural problems which plague the Museum (the roof extends for some 25 acres), as they do other old buildings, are *not* the responsibility of the curators nor, for that matter, are the cleaning of the galleries and many other chores. Such matters are dealt with by the Department of Works, the efficiency of which would well repay investigation.

The second point that has played such a part in shaping the formulation of the new policy (if that is the right word) is that the remuneration of the staff amounts to over 80% of the Government grant. This is undeniable, but it does not necessarily follow that the amount spent on the curatorial staff is due to this section being overmanned. It is a fact of life.

IN ANY EVENT, "housekeeping" and the financial situation were sufficient to provide the basis for a policy of reconstruction. These two problems, moreover, were just the right sort of raw meat to throw to the Trustees, who have been selected more for their business experience than for their knowledge of the arts. It has to be said that the majority of members of the Board, on the basis of the evidence that has emerged, seem to possess a very limited notion of their role as Trustees. Their duty is to hold the balance between the Museum and the public, and to safeguard the public interest. Their lack of *savoir faire* in such matters was stressed recently by Lord Goodman in the House of Lords.

Ideas about amalgamation of Departments and restructuring were already being considered by Mrs Esteve-Coll before her grilling by the Public Accounts Committee, and discussions took place among the senior staff as to the course of action that should be taken if a measure of reform was deemed to be desirable—although nothing of a drastic

DENYS SUTTON, *editor of "Apollo" magazine 1962-87, organised the Bonnard and 18th-century French art exhibitions at the Royal Academy, and various other major art exhibitions in Tokyo, the United States, and London. Formerly art critic to "Country Life" and the "Financial Times", his many books include works on Bonnard (1957), Derain (1959), Whistler (1966), Toulouse-Lautrec (1967), Velasquez (1967), Walter Sickert (1967), and Degas (1968).*

[1] Debate in House of Commons, 13 March 1989, *Hansard*, vol. 141. Debate in the House of Lords, 22 March 1989, *Hansard*, vol. 505, nos 56 and 57.



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nature was contemplated. Not surprisingly, a unanimous view failed to emerge. Reliable reports confirm that the senior Keepers did not fight a rearguard action over new objectives, but willingly engaged in discussions about their feasibility. As was their duty, some showed a sensible awareness of the snags that might be encountered: they did not gloss over difficulties.

At this juncture there was no hostility to the Director; indeed, many were initially pleased at her appointment, though the more sceptical might have wondered as to the wisdom of selecting someone with such limited experience. As is the British way, the new Director was given a fair run.

The document that came before the Board at the fateful meeting of 26 January is a rum one, consisting of a series of propositions in no way supported by analysis. It is hard to believe that Trustees who are supposed to be versed in the ways of the world were prepared to vote on it after only half an hour's consideration. Not the least of the oddities about this memorandum was the Trustees' acceptance of the financial plan (to be prepared by the end of March) being drafted in consultation with four "MBE" students from Harvard and supervised, on a voluntary basis, by a partner in the American firm of APM.

One objective of the plan was to destroy the autonomy of several of the most famous departments in the Museum. Thus the Departments of Ceramics and Glass, Metalwork and Sculpture are to be temporarily merged; the same process will occur with those of Textiles, Furniture, and Interior Design. Eventually, their possessions will be placed under two new departments: Research and the Registrar's Department.

The new dispensation will entail a clear-cut distinction between "housekeeping" and scholarship. The document is explicit in stating that "knowledge and expertise about the collection" will be "divided from the physical responsibility for managing the collections". It is, however, acknowledged that there will "need to be close consultation between those responsible for managing the collections and those with specialised knowledge of the collections". Hitherto, those with different forms of responsibility have worked in the same department.

THAT THIS ALL-important paper was not properly thought through is only too apparent. The Trustees, who blithely accepted it, do not appear to have possessed sufficient knowledge about the workings of an institution of which, alas, they are in command, to properly establish the identity of those officials who would be in charge of moving works of art and of acquisitions, or who would undertake valuations for estate duty, or for export control.[2] At one stage, a spokesman for the Museum even announced that a fee would be charged for such advisory services: this statement was subsequently withdrawn. After several anomalies in the proposals had been pointed out, the Chairman, Lord Armstrong, and his Deputy, Sir Michael Butler, sought to qualify them. It is tempting to ask if these ex-civil servants, both of the highest rank, had properly grasped the problems involved in the first place.

In reading the document and the statements made by the Chairman, by other members of the Board, and by the Director, it is sad to realise that there should be such a profound lack of understanding about the true purpose of the Museum, of the role of the Keepers and the motives that inspire people to enter museums.[3] Keepers have varied tasks: they have to decide about the suitability of lending to exhibitions; they have to see collectors, dealers, and their *cher collègues*; they have to visit the galleries and sale rooms; and they have to supervise the movement of objects within the museum. In short, they have to join in the corporate life of a department and of the Museum. All the time, their knowledge of the works of art in their charge is growing. Obviously, some are more gifted or more industrious than others (the two qualities are not synonymous), but such is the way of the world.

Now that the "scholars" are to be confined to their research pen, the managers will hold sway and the task of persuading donors to assist the Museum and sponsors to support projects will be that much harder. Rumour has it that a notable British Foundation intends to assist financially in the redecorating of important galleries. Under the present circumstances, its advisers would be wise to refrain from such action until the question of curatorial responsibility has been satisfactorily settled. Potential donors are said to be restive.

ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS for the failure of the Director and the Board to comprehend the functions of a Keeper is their limited experience of museums. This led them into the trap of creating a false image of the scholar, and of making a wrong distinction between the person in charge of an object and the one who studies it: they should be the same. Perhaps the Director and the Trustees are not altogether to blame for this misconception; many of the younger generation have made such a song and dance about their scholarship and have bleated about how much work they have to do, and have forgotten that many of their predecessors were able to combine all the functions of a curator, while producing excellent publications. Here, it needs to be stressed that those experts in a museum who write are interested not so much in the dissemination of general ideas as with the solution of precise problems, such as those relating to authenticity or stylistic influence. They are different from academic art historians, who are generally concerned with teaching and are thus more often inclined to put across ideas of a fanciful and tendentious nature.

Over the years, the staff at the Victoria and Albert Museum have produced important catalogues: those by Bernard Rackham of Italian maiolica, John Pope-Hennessy of Italian sculpture, R. W. Lightbown of metalwork,

[2] This point was made in my article in the *Financial Times* (25 February 1989), and driven home by Lord Gibson in a pertinent speech in the House of Lords (22 March).

[3] The importance of the contribution made by the Keepers was stressed by Sir John Pope-Hennessy in an important article, "The Fall of a Great Museum", in the *New York Review of Books* (27 April 1989).

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Graham Reynolds of the Constable collection, and, recently Paul Williamson of Northern Gothic sculpture, just to mention a few. Their writings are important because they reflect the findings of men who have lived with the works they are cataloguing: they result from a love affair with art.

The decision to scrap most of the old departments (Prints and Drawings remains intact) was accompanied by the offer of voluntary redundancy to nine members of the staff, including four Keepers of art departments. The reason (or pretext) given was a need to reduce expenditure. That these men and women were treated in a brutal and callous manner is now common knowledge. The behaviour of the Board—in my view, shifty to say the least—has been castigated by Patrick Cormack in the House of Commons, and by Lord Annan, Lord Goodman, Lord Hutchinson of Lullington and others in the House of Lords. The Keepers were offered redundancy payments, with little time in which to make up their minds, and were given no information about any alternative.

Lord Armstrong was compelled by Lord Goodman to admit that this was done, not after due deliberation by the Trustees, but on advice from the Government. Or should we say instructions? Lord Armstrong's damaging confession needs to be remembered.

WHEN Lord Armstrong and Lady Trumpington (the Government spokesmen in the House of Lords) were defending as best they could a badly conceived and ignoble policy, they did not realise that a time-bomb was ticking away beneath them. This was the article which Professor Martin Kemp had written for the May issue of *The Burlington Magazine* under the title "A Loss of Balance: The Trustees and Boards of National Museums and Galleries".

Professor Kemp had previously sat on the Board of the National Galleries of Scotland prior to joining that of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Recent events prompted his resignation. He is fair-minded and by no means blind to weaknesses in some sections of the Museum, both in the departments and in the Director's office. The effect of his article is devastating. He confirms not only that insufficient time was given to consideration of the paper, but that its formulation was far from being clear to him—as indeed to some of his colleagues.

Professor Kemp reveals that life in the boardroom could be hilarious. Many papers relating to the Museum were not circulated to members of the Board for "security" reasons (shades of *Spycatcher*!) but were tabled. On one occasion, "a smart young man" from Saatchi & Saatchi attended the meeting to "present a series of propositions on virtually every aspect of the Museum's operations. Each proposition was written on a single sheet of paper in large letters, and the Trustees were taken through these like a primary reading-class."

He notes that in the past such boards, even if "cosy establishment clubs", were operated, all the same, through unwritten rules of consensus and personal restraint. He rightly reminds us that "such structures are highly vulnerable". Boards of this nature, he avers, have been replaced by "far more active, partisan and managerially-minded bodies, many of whose members do not hesitate to impose their views on the organisations for which they are caring". He argues that the present Government has never made any secret "of the fact that it expects the board to promulgate policies which reflect the economic values of the market place".

There must be many, like myself, who, while supporting the Tory Party and admiring Mrs Thatcher's determination to invigorate the country, do not accept that the principle of market forces is applicable to all aspects of life. The famous quotation from the Bible: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin" is apposite in this respect. To express the wish that a balance may be struck between the two principles is not the same as asking for a consensus, but to argue for a division of problems into categories: a dash of Descartes must be added to Bentham, in fact.

Professor Kemp's distaste at the way in which so-called voluntary redundancies of the Keepers were arranged is understandable. His comments in general get to the heart of the matter. They confirm that the Trustees have mismanaged their job because they have failed to grasp the essential character of the museum. It is an error to believe that a museum is comparable to a business: it is not required to make a profit. If state museums are to exist, then they should be properly funded; and to accept the notion that they should rely too heavily on finance from the private sector is to make a fatal error. "Extras", if this be the right term, such as catalogues, exhibitions and acquisitions may well be financed privately, but the care of the fabric and the remuneration of the staff must be at the public charge. The directors of many American museums have to run cap in hand to donors because they are mostly not Federal, but private or city museums. Hence the constant need to arrange exhibitions that attract a public to pay entrance-charges so as to swell the coffers. What happens—as will be the case before too long—when exhibitions that attract a large public decline in number is another matter.

SINCE NATIONAL MUSEUMS are to exist in this country, then they have to be paid for by the taxpayer. The Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum would be well advised to read John Myerscough's *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (1988).[4] This provides useful information for those anxious to persuade the Government of the need to provide more funds for the museums. It can be argued that without the existence of such a wide range of museums, monuments and country-houses, tourists would not visit Britain in such great numbers. That their presence generates a huge income is undeniable; the museums should benefit from the profits of this "invisible" revenue.

[4] For an account of this book and of the present situation in the arts, see my article "The National Collections", in ENCOUNTER, January 1989.

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That the Trustees and Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum possess singularly poor judgment is attested to by numerous instances. It is one sign of changed values and falling standards that two members of the Board—Sir Terence Conran and Maurice Saatchi—engage in business with the Museum. The tone of the advertisements prepared by Saatchi & Saatchi for the Museum wad deplorable. No less shocking was the permission given to Sotheby's to hold a preview for the sale of the Elton John Collection and to allow bids to be accepted.

Lord Armstrong's reply in the House of Lords to criticism of this and other shows was inadequate, to say the least. Here are his words:

> "It seems to me a very good idea that people should come into the museum in this way and learn to think of it not just as a historic museum of dead gothic sculptures and the rest. Of course those exhibitions [Elton John, Sock Shop, and Burberry] bring us in a little more money and we are not reluctant to accept."

It is debatable whether the Victoria and Albert Museum should have agreed to lend works from the Museum and from the Wellington Bequest at Apsley House for an exhibition at Harrods—not because loans of this sort are wrong, but because on this occasion the arrangements for the safety of the objects seemed to be inadequate. Moreover, the wishes of a testator, William Dyce, were flouted by lending a picture from his Bequest. Were the Trustees aware of this, and, if not, why were they not told by the Director? If they were apprised of this condition, how is it that they agreed to break it? These are serious questions that need to be answered.

When the subject of the loan to Harrods was raised in the House of Lords, both verbally and in a written question (the Dyce loan was not mentioned), Lady Trumpington denied that the Government had any responsibility. Such matters, she argued, were exclusively for the Board of Trustees. If this is the case, why was the Board prepared to seek, and accept, the Government's view about the way in which the redundancy of the staff should be handled? Did they challenge its propriety under the circumstances?

In any event, we are faced with a situation in which the Board, so it seems, is responsible to no one but itself. The conduct of one of the greatest museums in the world is now in the hands of Trustees whose scanty knowledge about artistic matters is complemented by their cavalier attitude to bequests. It is a tragic state of affairs, although in the last analysis they can be bought to heel by the Minister for the Arts or the Prime Minister.

During the House of Lords debate, Lord Perth suggested that the Victoria and Albert Museum Board should seek the assistance of the Museums and Galleries Commission over the problems that require attention. This might well prove to be a valuable course of action. However, any advice that this benevolent if by no means expert body might proffer would very likely contradict the "philosophy" of the Director which, we are repeatedly told, is fully endorsed by the Board.

It is significant that when a committee was formed to appoint an Assistant Director (Collections), a new post, it consisted of only three members, the Director, Professor Christopher Frayling, and Nicholas Serota, Director of the Tate Gallery, who was coopted; note that none has any real experience of major museums or of older art, which forms the basis of the collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Although the short list is said to have consisted of five persons, no one was chosen. The trio presumably wishes to appoint someone whose opinions are more in accord with those of Mrs Esteve-Coll.

Her views are only too familiar. She aims to bring about a radical change in the way in which the Museum is presented; it is to be designed, she patronisingly considers, for those who are unaware of the past and of religion. She has plans to mount an exhibition, "Japan Perspective", that will draw "not 2,000 people a day but 5,000 plus": "Science and technology will be all-pervasive in the exhibition: they *must* because that is the way the man in the street is familiar with Japan." But the function of the Victoria and Albert Museum is not that of a science and technological institution.

Mrs Esteve-Coll and Lord Armstrong have the effrontery —it is nothing less—to engage in disinformation tactics by claiming that their opponents belong to a Courtauld Institute mafia. This is rubbish: the Courtauld Institute does not deal with the decorative arts. Their critics come from different backgrounds. Their words, in fact, underline, alas only too vividly, that the Director and Chairman are ignorant of the factors involved.

The Trustees have failed to grasp that, whether they wished it or not, they have assisted in a *coup d'état* that will transform the museum out of all recognition—such is Mrs Esteve-Coll's stated aim. If this sorry band knew their Balzac they would have been more capable of spotting the motives that lie behind manoeuvres that have succeeded (at any rate for the moment) in eliminating from the staff those who believe in the preservation of a noble tradition. In doing so, the complacent and unsophisticated Trustees have connived in a policy that will lead to the decline of values that over the years have been appreciated by people from diverse backgrounds—economic, educational, and social—who have aspired to understand, in a true sense, more about art and design.

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# *LAW*

# Crossing the Bar

## *By Anthony Hooper*

*"The Government believes that free competition between the providers of legal services will, through the discipline of the market, ensure that the public is provided with the most efficient and effective network of legal services at the most economical price. . . ."*

THOSE WORDS form part of the introduction to the Thatcher Government's recently published Green Paper (or, more precisely, the green-covered white paper) on the work and organisation of the legal profession in all parts of the United Kingdom, other than Scotland. Although presented to Parliament by the (Scottish) Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the style of the document seems more in keeping with that expected from the Department of Trade and Industry. (The influence of the Treasury also seems apparent, in that the Green Paper is almost silent on the question of Government assistance to those who cannot afford to retain the services of a lawyer.)

The opposition of the judiciary and the Bar to its proposals has been well-publicised. The Lord Chief Justice—who was not consulted by the Lord Chancellor and, it now emerges, specifically requested that he should not be—has led the attack. In a gesture worthy of any great advocate (or actor), he buried the Green Paper in a time capsule within the foundations of a new court building, with the expressed hope that the burial of "one of the most sinister documents ever to emanate from Government" would be both "symbolic" and "prophetic". This reaction and the reactions of other past and present judges, along with leaders of the Bar, have led Bernard Levin in *The Times* to another outraged assault on the judiciary and Queen's Counsel ("In Defence of the Great Lie", 6 March). Other commentators and, I suspect, many members of the public, on seeing the Bar squealing loudly, have concluded that the reforms must be "a good thing"—a simplistic approach which would meet with derision if used, for example, by the pro-hunting lobby. Those on the left of the political spectrum are delighted that Thatcherism is now hurting one of the pillars of the Establishment.

In contrast, Peregrine Worsthorne wrote a powerful editorial in the *Sunday Telegraph* ("War on the Professions", 5 March), attacking this "so-called Conservative Government" for seeking to "embourgeoisify" the professional classes. He meant by that:

> ". . . the process by which teachers, doctors and lawyers—and museum curators, too, come to that—are persuaded, bullied or tempted into abandoning the values and priorities of their respective professional concerns (education, medicine, justice—and even art) in favour of the values and priorities of trade and commerce."

To similar effect in the *Financial Times* ("A Sacrifice to Competition", 1 March), Lord Benson wrote: ". . . it is depressing to watch [the Government] sacrifice the legal profession on the shrine of political dogma called competition."

The three main proposals of the Green Paper, in so far as they affect the Bar, can be summarised as follows. Under the first proposal, the right to represent another person before any court or tribunal would be granted to persons—whether lawyers or not—who demonstrate to a "relevant supervisory" body that "they have the appropriate education, training and qualifications and are bound by appropriate codes of conduct". Such persons are to be described as "advocates". It would be for the Lord Chancellor, after consulation, to lay down in subordinate legislation the necessary qualifications which would entitle a person to be an advocate in any particular court or tribunal. Advocacy certificates would be granted by one of the relevant supervisory bodies authorised by the Lord Chancellor.

The second main proposal is that barristers should be free (as they are not at present) to conduct business directly with clients, like any other "advocate". Anyone wishing to be advised by, or represented by, a barrister will no longer need to use the services of an intermediary. The Green Paper envisages, however, that an advocate *could* choose to belong to a "voluntary association" the rules of which provided that its members will not receive clients directly.

The third main proposal is that barristers should be free, like any other advocates, to practise either on their own or in any corporate form they choose. Restrictions on the right to create multi-disciplinary and multi-national practices should be removed. Any kind of advocate should be able to practise alone or with any other kind of advocate, or with non-advocates—"consistent with the safeguarding of clients' interests".

These three proposals, if implemented, would, in the view of many, result in the disappearance over a period of years of the now recognisably distinct profession of barristers. By

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that I mean a profession of self-employed lawyers who hold themselves out as specialists in various fields, only one of which is advocacy, and who set out to provide a service to other professionals, in particular to solicitors. Before deciding whether such a disappearance would be desirable or not, we should consider whether that conclusion (said—by those who are not barristers—to be unnecessarily pessimistic or alarmist) is a reasonable one to draw. It is the third proposal which most concerns the Director-General of Fair Trading, Sir Gordon Borrie; and which is arguably the most destructive. There are indications that the consumer movement, though it was quick to praise the Green Paper, may yet have second thoughts about this proposal.

Its implementation will inevitably lead to the creation of huge firms which would be entitled to call themselves "solicitors and barristers" and, additionally, "chartered accountants", "estate agents", "surveyors", etc. Whether such restructuring of the traditional professions is a good thing or not, it seems certain that, over a period of time, they will have no further need for the self-employed barrister. Although some big City firms of solicitors are saying that they will not be recruiting barristers, it seems certain that barristers *will* be bought up to staff their litigation departments, if not also other specialist departments.

Surely American corporate clients will be more impressed by firms with a sprinkling of Queen's Counsels on the letterhead? Non-barrister advocates will be able, under the Green Paper, to become QCs. But why wait for that, when QCs can be bought instead?

Following the lead of the large firms, many medium-sized firms of solicitors will want a litigation department, the members of which will have, between them, the necessary advocacy certificates. Will they not feel at a disadvantage if they cannot also call themselves "solicitors and barristers"? If they wish to expand into an area of law for which up to now they have used self-employed barristers, why not take a ready-made specialist barrister on to their staff?

THE FIRST PROPOSAL concerns itself with rights of audience. It will have a dramatic impact on those members of the Bar who specialise in advocacy. At the present time, self-employed barristers have, in effect, the sole rights of audience in all cases in the High Court and Crown Court. Before the numerous other courts and tribunals which determine the rights and obligations of the public these barristers, on the other hand, have to compete variously with solicitors, employed barristers, and other persons. In practice, however, the self-employed barrister has an advantage. The tradition has been to instruct barristers in many courts and tribunals in which they have no exclusive rights; and many solicitors do not in fact use the rights which they already have. It seems inevitable that the combination of the first and third proposals will change that. Large and medium-sized firms of solicitors will now be able to have their own barristers to do their trial work. And some solicitors now not able to appear in the High Court will, over a period of time, begin to exercise their rights.

In Crown Court, the change will come fast. The Crown Prosecuting Service and the other large prosecuting authorities (Customs & Excise, Inland Revenue) will be able to have their cases prosecuted in the Crown Court by staff advocates with the necessary certificates, and it seems clear that they will wish to do so. It is felt that granting this right will assist recruitment and morale, and that exercising it will result in cost savings. So much for the arguments in favour of privatisation. The incentive to regional heads of the services to build a larger empire by employing more staff will be a strong one. They will, of course, continue to instruct self-employed barristers for a while. However, today's recruits will want to move on to the more demanding work in the near future, and will find it easy to convince themselves that they are capable of doing it. If barristers who have been in practice for five to ten years are persuaded to join the staff of the prosecuting authorities, it will be only a matter of a few years before the Crown's case will almost invariably be presented by employed staff. The employed advocates who will be doing the pleas of guilty after the implementation of these proposals will, before very long, be doing all the cases.

The self-employed barrister is likely to last a little longer, defending. Almost all defendants are legally aided, and solicitors may show a greater reluctance to represent them in Crown Court. On the other hand, those firms of solicitors who now do legal aid work and who establish full litigation departments may feel that it is more economic to keep the work in-house, and that it would be a good idea for their advocates to get some practice in the Crown Courts. Indeed, if advocacy certificates become like pilot's licences, they will have to keep their hands in. What better place than representing a legally-aided defendant in the Crown Court? Furthermore, the new Legal Aid Act has embodied in it the power to take away from Crown Courts the ability to grant and control legal aid in criminal cases; and implementation, although as yet on the distant horizon, may well encourage this process.

The effect of these proposals will not be to destroy the Bar overnight. Indeed, their implementation would not mean the disappearance of the self-employed barrister: there will probably always be room for such a person. The problem is that the aspiring advocate would be ill-advised to obtain his experience as a self-employed barrister. He will not be able to learn the trade by prosecuting pleas of guilty or uncomplicated trials in the Crown Court. This will be done by members of the salaried prosecuting authority, working their way up the ladder. He could perhaps expect some defence work. However, the firms of solicitor-barristers may keep it for themselves, and there will be a great deal of competition from those barristers who can no longer prosecute. The aspiring advocate would be far better advised to join a prosecuting authority or a firm with its own staff of advocates. He might like to call himself a "barrister" for romantic, historical reasons; but he will be no different from any other lawyer.

WHAT EFFECT will the second proposal have on the self-employed barrister of today? It envisages the continuance of some barristers who will belong to a voluntary organisation

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which restricts their right to have direct access to their lay clients. But what about the others? This country, like some other European countries, is in the enviable position of having a substantial population within a comparatively short distance of very large urban centres. Within four hours or so of London live some 40 million people—a sufficient number to support a specialised profession of lawyers servicing other lawyers.

In this country a lay client can walk into any firm of solicitors, however small, and obtain through it the services of a specialist barrister. Thus a firm may remain small, "user-friendly" and cheap, and yet have available to it the specialist skills of the Bar. The solicitor who would be very reluctant to send his client to a firm of solicitor-barristers, lest they "steal" the client, can send him to a barrister who, because of the restrictions on direct access to lay clients, can never poach in this way. Nor need a solicitor pretend to the client that he is capable of doing work of which he is not capable. He can tell his client that he is able to call up "the expert". The Green Paper permits this system to continue. However, under the new system a solicitor cannot assume that the barrister will not "steal" the client unless he first assures himself that the particular barrister he would like to use is a member of one of the voluntary associations (and likely to remain so).

THE THREE PROPOSALS—in particular, the third alone or in combination with the first—will lead to the withering away of the profession of the self-employed specialist barrister available as a resource to solicitors. One of the major criticisms of the Green Paper must be that it fails to see this as an inevitable consequence of its proposed reforms. Indeed Lord Mackay strenuously denies that this is his aim. However, the question must still be asked: "Is there any justification for preserving the profession of barrister in the sense described above?"

Let me first approach that question in the terms used by the Green Paper. Would preservation, albeit with changes, "ensure that the public is provided with the most efficient and effective network of legal services at the most economical price"? Implementation of the Green Paper will, no doubt, be advantageous to the large corporate client. Just as the Big Bang in the City brought in cheaper dealing to large institutions, so also may it bring in cheaper legal services for them. Commercial barristers, who now have a monopoly in the High Court, may perhaps be forced to reduce their fees (although I suspect that the head of a new litigation department may charge the client far higher fees than the barrister ever did). City firms of solicitors will have to compete with mega-firms of multi-disciplinary experts. Corporate clients will be able to walk through one door and be served by barristers, solicitors, chartered accountants, surveyors, etc., who are corporately and individually members of diverse self-regulatory bodies, and kept apart by Chinese walls.

These miracles of 20th-century efficiency have, however, nothing to do either with "the man on the Clapham omnibus" or even with the owner of a BMW. The truth is that no mere mortal will be able to afford the services of these mega-firms, even assuming that the firms wished to deal with such a person. If any individual could afford their services, it will not be the senior partner who attends to him but some young associate whose future depends upon the number of hours that he bills, and thus upon the number of hours that he works (or purports to work). Legal advice is, so often, a matter of judgment. It may well be that hours of research at £150 a hour will come up with a clever argument which will entertain their Lordships in the House of Lords before they dismiss it as ingenious but erroneous. But a lay client will often get far better advice from a small firm of solicitors than he will ever obtain from the huge City firms. (That is not to decry the benefits of such firms. If Mr Big wants to take over Mr Bigger, such a firm can provide him with an unlimited number of experts to work around the clock.)

The average user of accountancy services will also prefer to have an accountant from a small or medium-sized firm, perhaps with an office outside London at a rental of less than £60 per square foot. Likewise the average user of a solicitor's legal services is likely to prefer the small or medium-sized firm. (Indeed, of the 8,000 firms of solicitors in England and Wales, only 345—according to a recent survey—have more than 10 principals.) Nor is the average user going to want a single firm comprising both accountants and solicitors. He will be quite happy for the solicitor and the accountant to communicate with each other. Since the same person cannot do two tasks, it would not matter to most people that the two persons are in different firms.

Since the majority of clients prefer small or medium-sized firms, and since such firms are likely to be cheaper, how will the implementation of the three proposals concerning the Bar affect the consumer? In practice, the overheads of barristers are far lower than those of solicitors. Many barristers share rooms (my own room provides accommodation for three others) and do not need a large staff. Indeed, the Crown Prosecuting Service pays barristers in the magistrates' courts far less than it pays solicitors.

Small and medium-sized firms of solicitors are able to choose from such a wide range that they should be able to find the right barrister at the right price. The saying "horses for courses" is particularly applicable to trial barristers. The barrister who is good at coping with complicated frauds may not do so well in undermining the credibility of, say, a police officer whose evidence, according to the client, is untrue. Some barristers are too aggressive for certain types of cases. Some are better "lawyers" than others. Some clients may prefer their case to be conducted by a barrister of a particular minority group. No medium or small firm of solicitors could employ on a full-time basis persons with the range of characteristics, talents and specialised knowledge which the Bar can offer. They need a separate branch of the profession which will enable them to employ specialists on an *ad hoc* basis, when they are required. Provided that the Bar offers the solicitors considerable choice and its members (now some 6,000 in all) remain competitive in both cost and efficiency, it seems unarguable that the continued existence of the Bar is in the interests of the consumer.

If the Bar were to wither away, the present range of choice would no longer be available. Small and medium-

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sized firms of solicitors would suffer—their inability to bring in "the expert" would mean that they could no longer compete on equal terms with the larger firms and Government Departments. These firms would continue to exist (because clients would still prefer them), but they would attempt to do work for which they do not have the expertise, rather than risk sending the clients to another firm of solicitors.

WILL THE WITHERING AWAY of the Bar really "ensure that the public is provided with the most efficient and effective network of legal services at the most economical price"? The answer must surely be in the negative. Because the Green Paper never really considers the impact of its three proposals on the Bar, it never deals with the economic consequences of the inevitable result.

I have so far, in examining the proposals, used the economic criteria found in the Green Paper. There are, however, other criteria which are important, even if they cannot easily be calculated in money terms. The existence of a separate specialised legal profession enables the solicitor to call for the advice of a person who is more removed from the client. Inevitably and rightly, solicitors become close to their clients. The risk is that this closeness prevents or hinders them from giving completely independent advice. A solicitor who has known a client for a long time may not see that the client is at serious risk, say of being prosecuted. A barrister who is advising a client whom he does not know and who has no preconceived ideas about the honesty or truthfulness of the client, may well be able to give far better advice. Of course, another solicitor could do that just as well—but is one solicitor going to risk letting another solicitor come into the case?

One of the most important characteristics of a legal system in a free society is that the advocate (in particular the trial advocate) representing an unpopular person or cause must not be seen by the public or by the executive, legislative, or judicial branches of the state as personally linked with that person or cause. The message may be unpopular; but the messenger should not be identified with the message. In the absence of this tradition, persons charged with vile crimes—particularly those with political overtones—will find that the selection of advocates available to him is very limited. The freedom to choose among a substantial number of advocates is a vital liberty.

Recent events in Northern Ireland and Singapore, to name just two places, show the dangers when this tradition is eroded. Self-employed barristers—subject, as they are, to a professional rule that forbids any refusal to take a case on the grounds that the client is unpopular (an application of the so-called "cab-rank principle")—are the best way of ensuring that the tradition will continue. Solicitors (or even partnerships of barristers) will find good reasons for not accepting unpopular clients—from "They lower the tone of the waiting- room" to "Our corporate clients would not like it if we defended a member of the IRA". The withering away of the Bar is very likely to lead to an erosion of this tradition—and Britain will have lost something which it would be difficult, if not impossible, to replace.

There exists a frequently-heard argument that the Bar preserves itself by means of a series of restrictive practices which would be the envy of any other trade union. But, setting aside such irrelevancies as wigs and gowns, there is only one restrictive practice of any importance—and that is the exclusive right of audience in the higher courts. This is of only marginal significance to many barristers. Those who specialise in family law must compete with solicitors because most of their work will, if there is a trial, end up in the county court or magistrates' court; while those who specialise in planning or labour law will only rarely go into the High Court. There are arguments for maintaining the restrictive practice. A small profession, many of whose members are highly experienced and who often work with and against each other, is likely to conduct trials far more quickly and therefore more cheaply. Integrity on the part of advocates, particularly on the part of the prosecutors, is vital to the fair and expeditious conduct of trials. A small close-knit profession is likely to encourage integrity—for today's prosecutor is tomorrow defending, or sitting as a Recorder (a unique feature of the system of justice in this country). However, these rather intangible benefits are not easy to prove empirically. Nor is it easy to draw the line between the kinds of cases which should be preserved for one branch of the profession. Furthermore, the Bar cannot argue that solicitor-advocates would not be good advocates—North American experience shows that many would be, particularly those in big firms.

Reluctantly, perhaps, I therefore reach the conclusion that the Bar should concede rights of audience in all courts to solicitors in private practice. The granting of rights of audience to Government lawyers in the High and Crown Courts raises other problems, and the matter should be considered far more carefully than it has been in this Green Paper. The effect on the proper conduct of criminal trials, in particular, as well as the effect on the Bar is likely to be dramatic; no such changes should be introduced without a close examination of the experience in other countries, particularly North America.

The effect of removing not only the Bar's exclusive right to appear in the High and Crown Courts, but also the obligatory restrictions upon the right to accept instructions directly from a lay client and upon the right to enter partnerships with other professionals, would be to the detriment of consumers and to society generally. The title "barrister" would have no meaning—a barrister could be a self-employed lawyer taking instructions only from solicitors (as at present): or a self-employed lawyer receiving clients directly; or a lawyer in partnership with other lawyers, chartered accountants, surveyors, etc.; or a lawyer working full-time for the state.

If barristers were to give up their exclusive rights of audience (which are, in any event, likely to be forcibly removed from them), they could perhaps convince the Government and the public that there is an important place for the self-employed barrister—and, further, that the title "barrister" should be restricted to those who agree to be bound by rules of conduct designed to maintain an independent but competitive Bar, available to advise or represent anyone, however unpopular the client's cause may be.

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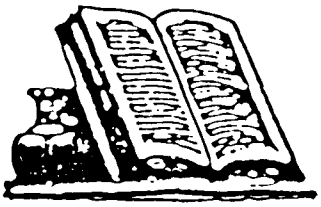
# IN THE MARGIN

# Saving Mr Rushdie?

## *By Anthony Hartley*



THE ROW unleashed by the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* has been submerged by other items of news—Miss Pamella Bordes, Lonrho, the defects of Britain's transport system —and by now only exists as a torrent of editorials, manifestos, and letters to the papers in whose murky eddies it is hard to perceive any clear pattern. None the less one is left with the impression that the issues raised by the affair are important and likely to appear more significant as time goes on. Perhaps, therefore, now that things have quietened down, now that Mr Rushdie is safely in hiding under the care of the Special Branch and likely to remain so, it might be worth trying to discover exactly what those issues were. That they were not simple is obvious. That any very definite conclusions can be drawn about them seems improbable. As Kant once put it about that flawed human nature, of which the Rushdie case affords such singular and depressing examples: "Out of such crooked wood . . . nothing straight can be made."

There is little dispute about the facts of the case. To start with, it seems to be agreed that *The Satanic Verses* does contain much that is profoundly offensive to a believing Muslim. The sections of this surrealist novel about the Prophet Mahound and the city of Jahilia deal with Islam and its origins much as Voltaire dealt with Christianity in the 18th century and with the same destructive intent. It is hardly surprising that they did not fail in their effect. Mr Rushdie himself recognised this when, in a vain hope of parrying the threatened reprisals, he apologised for "the distress that publication has occasioned to sincere followers of Islam" (*The Times,* 20 February 1989).

Surprisingly enough, when the book was published in November 1988, there was no immediate outcry. It was only in January that the book was burned by Bradford Muslims demonstrating against W. H. Smith's stocking it, and only on 14 February 1989 that the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini announced his condemnation of Mr Rushdie and others concerned in the book's publication.[1] This was a judgment expressed in the terms of Islamic law; Mr Rushdie was an apostate from Islam, and the penalty for apostasy is death.[2] The position with respect to Viking Books and the non-Muslims concerned was simpler: an assault by outside enemies of Islam must be met by a *jihad* or holy war.

However, the sequence of events leading up to the Ayatollah's declaration remains obscure. Just before it, there had been rioting in Islamabad in protest against *The Satanic Verses* which resulted in five dead and seventy injured (Mr Rushdie commented: "The deaths are not on my conscience"). This agitation in Pakistan was certainly connected with the objections of political opponents and orthodox Muslims to the Presidency of Benazir Bhutto; they saw in the controversy an opportunity to whip up religious feeling against secularism. There is also some evidence that the Bradford demonstration may have been tele-guided from Pakistan, and the delay in reacting could, therefore, be explained by the time the book took to reach the sub-continent. What seems clear is that the Ayatollah Khomeini (or his entourage) took the case up after the Islamabad riots because he saw in it a convenient means of rekindling Islamic revolutionary fervour in his own people after the disillusionments of the Gulf War. The future succession to the Ayatollah and the course to be taken by Iran after his death were also factors in the launching of the sentence. Those in Tehran opposed to any reconciliation with the West saw their chance and took it. Thus while there might, in any case, have been protests from devout Muslims over the book, these would not have taken on so impressive a dimension, had there not been political advantage to be gained from the agitation both in Pakistan and Iran.

THERE MAY BE differences of opinion as to what went on between Britain, Pakistan, and Iran, but everyone seems agreed on the seriousness of the threat to Mr Rushdie. The immediate comment of one expert, Dr James Dickie, a Visiting Professor at Harvard, was that "Rushdie is a dead man. There is no place safe for him in the world" (*The Times,* 22 February 1989). For his own protection Mr Rushdie was spirited away by the London police, while Tehran Radio announced a reward of six million dollars for any Iranian who succeeded in killing him.[3] All attempts at apologetic compromise were rejected by the Iranians, and the President of Iran, Ali Khamenei, who had suggested that Mr Rushdie might "repent", concluded: "An arrow has been shot and is unerringly aimed at its target. There is nothing more that can be done." Added point was given to

[1] Khomeini's announcement ran as follows: "I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of *The Satanic Verses* book which is against Islam, the Prophet and the Koran, and all those involved in its publication, who were aware of its contents, are sentenced to death" (*The Times,* 15 February 1989).

[2] On the other hand, the Ayatollah condemned Mr Rushdie to death before the latter had appeared before an Islamic court. There was, therefore a *vice de forme* in the judgment, which meant that Khomeini could be accused of proceeding hastily and unjustly. (I owe this point to Professor Elie Kedourie.)

[3] Oddly enough, a foreigner carrying out the same operation was only offered $4 million. This may have been because a foreigner would actually have to be paid, or else because of Iran's shortage of foreign currency.



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his statement by a bomb attack in Los Angeles on the wife of the American naval captain whose ship had shot down an Iranian civil airliner in the Gulf.

International reaction in support of Mr Rushdie was dispersed and not specially effective. European Community countries withdrew their ambassadors from Tehran, but this impressive gesture was not sustained, and some of them returned a month or so later. Britain reluctantly broke off relations with Iran, the Foreign Office clearly vexed and baffled to see so bizarre an incident intrude on its carefully laid plans for a *rapprochement* with that country. Other states, like New Zealand mindful of its exports of lamb, simply ignored the whole incident. Despite general Muslim disapproval of *The Satanic Verses,* no other Muslim country followed the Ayatollah in calling for Rushdie's death. An Islamic conference assembled at Riyadh followed a moderate lead by the Saudis, who saw in Khomeini's declaration a move designed to assert Iranian leadership of the Muslim world. Sporadic anti-Rushdie rioting and bomb attacks against British missions in Ankara and Kuala Lumpur indicated that the *jihad* against the foes of Islam was under way.

In the United States, President Bush—a "great Satan", no doubt, in his own right—condemned the Ayatollah and supported those countries who had done the same. In New York, booksellers withdrew *The Satanic Verses* from display, while intellectuals appeared more concerned to give vent to their own masochism than to discuss the affair seriously. Norman Mailer, for instance, declared his support for Mr Rushdie because, if he were not supported, then "fundamentalist groups in America . . . will know how to apply the same methods to American writers". American liberal intellectuals, more concerned with the outrageous inaction of the White House than with the outrageous action of Khomeini, slipped easily into the same overestimation of American power as their colleagues at the other end of the political spectrum.[4]

In Britain, reaction to the Ayatollah's decree was often as strange as the fact itself. Connoisseurs of the improbable enjoyed the spectacle of Harold Pinter rushing to Downing Street to beg Mrs Thatcher to display all those iron-clad qualities of which he had so often publicly disapproved. There was a sudden realisation among writers and mediamen that such things as security services and telephone tapping had their point. Terrorism, it seemed, could be borne with equanimity as long as its target was politicians and policemen. Writers were another matter. Mr Rushdie was defended by his colleagues and their professional organisations in statements and appearances on television. There were some dissenting voices—notably that of Roald Dahl, who thought that the book should be withdrawn, since it was not worth putting lives in danger for it—but most comment stressed the prime importance of the right of free expression. The most common reaction was shock and revulsion at a death sentence passed on a British subject by an Iranian fanatic. For the Ayatollah appeared in the guise of a familiar ghost from the past—one of those villainous Muslim clerics, a Fakir of Ipi or a mad Mullah, who used to be portrayed, larger than life, in popular histories of the British Empire. Nor did his appearance do anything to change that image.

British Muslims continued to disapprove of Mr Rushdie. The Secretary of the Bradford Mosque was even quoted as saying that he would willingly sacrifice his own life and that of his family "to carry out the Ayatollah's wishes". But the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, read the riot act to the leaders of the Muslim Community, and since then there has been no open talk of violence, though what is said in the mosques in the decent obscurity of Urdu presumably remains unknown to the authorities.

WHAT CONCLUSION can be drawn from these events, involving, as they do, freedom of speech, the conduct of international relations, and the behaviour of the immigrant community in Britain? Immediately, of course, there is only one thing to do. The British Government is in honour bound to defend one of its nationals against a threat of assassination, and can hardly entertain relations with a country which is prepared to initiate and justify a campaign of terror against an individual. It was perfectly right to sever relations with Iran, and, whatever economic advantages may be lost, these should not be resumed until things have changed in Tehran. The public condoning of assassination by a government is not something that should pass without sanctions of some kind, and, for all intents and purposes, the Ayatollah must be considered as dominating the Iranian government, even if he is neither President nor Prime Minister.

Nor can this verdict be modified by the character of Mr Rushdie himself—a rather disagreeable Diogenes, it seems. In his writing everyone and everything is drenched in acid—Muhammad, Gandhi, Mrs Thatcher, Britain's police, and other institutions. To trail his coat is his literary method, and perhaps it is not surprising that this time it has got caught in the machinery. None the less, it is the duty of the British Government—a duty as much to itself as to him—to afford him protection against the barbarous threats from Qom. How long such protection will be needed or can be given is another matter. Even after the death of the Ayatollah it seems likely that his voice will linger on in the ears of groups of fanatics. Mr Rushdie seems doomed to live in seclusion without either public appearances or foreign travel. There is little that can be done about this. As the Los Angeles bombing shows, Iranian terrorism is not without organisation or intelligence. In addition, its agents are not afraid of dying themselves, provided they can take their quarry with them. When it will be safe for Mr Rushdie to emerge from hiding only security experts can tell. If he has been careless of other people's feelings in his writings, he is certainly paying for it now.

[4] See George Szamuely's article, "How to Back Rushdie (and Blame the US)" (*The Sunday Post,* 12 March 1989). Mr Szamuely quotes Frances Fitzgerald as explaining that the Ayatollah's régime is only "a reaction to the cultural chaos the West has produced in Iran". Possibly, but as G. K. Chesterton once wrote about the beginnings of National Socialism, when you see a horse running away, the first thing to do is stop it. Only then do you enquire whether someone has stuck a pin into it.

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However, to declare that the person of Salman Rushdie and the principle of free expression must be defended does not take us very far. It certainly does not dispose of the problematical side of this strange sequence of events. Consider for a moment the magnitude of historical change implied by the fact that all of us accept without question that Mr Rushdie stands in mortal danger. Given the natural instincts of journalists and the boost to the sales of *The Satanic Verses,* it is extraordinary that there has been no hint in the press of a put-up job or public relations gimmick. Thirty years ago it would have seemed laughable that a remote, turbaned figure in the mountains of Iran should sentence someone in this country to death—part of an adventure tale from the *Boy's Own Paper* or the writing of Sax Rohmer rather than a political reality. Yet now the idea of a man being shot or poisoned in London on orders from Qom or Tripoli is familiar enough.

IT HAS already happened on a number of occasions. There is no reason why it should not happen again. The sect of the Assassins has been brought up to date, born again in the two countries where it flourished at the time of the Crusades: Persia and Lebanon. It has its "old Man of the Mountain" in the Ayatollah and its *fida'is* (emissaries) in fanatical splinter groups like Hizbullah. Like their forbears, the assassins can penetrate frontiers and be successful in seeking out those who have most reason to beware of them. The fiction of half a century ago has become fact once again.

The change has, of course, been brought about by improved communications and improved techniques of terrorism. It has become so easy to travel, and there are so many excuses for it: study, business, conference-going, tourism. With the volume of air traffic it is increasingly difficult to spot even known terrorists at airports. With the numbers of people from all parts of the world living in a cosmopolitan city like London, it is impossible to say which of them might or might not be running a "safe house" or hiding an arms cache. It is not hard to slip over a frontier, commit murder and be out again in 24 hours. Moreover, many of those concerned will have had expert training in terrorist techniques. They will obtain weapons easily enough, and there will be instructors to teach them how to use these. Perhaps the arms themselves will be awaiting their users at their destination, safely transported by diplomatic bag. After the long struggle against Israel, the Middle East has no shortage of men trained in a hard school of clandestine operations and ruthless in their application of the lessons they have received.

Some time back I wrote an article in ENCOUNTER called "The Barbarian Connection".[5] This use of the word "barbarian" was not pejorative. It simply meant "alien", and my theme was the gradual intrusion into Western society of values foreign to it and, therefore, liable to be disruptive of its rational humanistic assumptions. At that time I wrote:

> "A growing indifference in Africa and Asia to a tradition of Western humanism—which had been imposed, first by European colonial powers as they spread their influence throughout the world, and, more recently, by the United States in the name of the "American Century"—is not very surprising. Indeed, it is only part of a more general alienation from Western political and social beliefs and a return to indigenous forms of government and society."

Since then the process has gone further still, and another imperial power has felt its impact in Afghanistan. Now, with his condemnation of Mr Rushdie, the Ayatollah Khomeini is setting his own values against the whole tradition of international law as it has been developed by Western rationalism over the centuries. In his own view, he is merely being faithful to the teaching of Islam and defending his religion from insult. But his repudiation of accepted international norms of behaviour faces Western countries—and, in this instance, Britain—with an assault on their own cultural traditions which it is not easy to repel.

IT IS OUR very understanding of the Ayatollah's motives which makes us vulnerable. Our historical and relativist approach to alien cultures tempts us into an effort of comprehension which disarms our objections to what we believe we have understood. It is difficult to dismiss entirely an historical phenomenon like the Muslim religion—to say it is wrong or that it must be subordinated to our own beliefs. Our present habits of thought forbid the establishment of a hierarchy of values with our own on the top of the heap. Yet, if there is no such hierarchy, we risk succumbing to pressure from outside. Indeed, whatever decision we take, we are bound to be the losers.

For either we must abandon our own values and accept those of the Ayatollah—that is what giving in to his threats (e.g. by apologising or withdrawing the book) would imply—or else we must defend our own traditions of free speech and publication at the price of losing political influence and commercial advantage. There must certainly be a temptation here to consent to a tactful softening of our principles. But this would be a dangerous error. For who knows who else might incur Khomeini's wrath, or what other features of modern society might be found offensive to Islam? If his values are to be set against ours—and the cultural aggression came from his side—then we must stand our ground, however difficult the tactical situation maybe.[6]

It would, indeed, be tempting to meet violence with violence—an attack on Iranian oil installations, for instance. But, despite the apparent success of the American raid on Tripoli, this would prejudice the future course of events in Iran and, almost certainly, bring about the deaths of the British hostages in Beirut.

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[5] Anthony Hartley, "The Barbarian Connection", ENCOUNTER, May 1980.

[6] This is not to say that firmness will have much effect on the Ayatollah and those around him. It is all very well for Robert Kilroy-Silk to write in *The Times*: "Had a firm and unequivocal stand been taken from the beginning by our politicians in favour of free speech and a free press . . . then this whole disgraceful affair might have been stopped early on . . ." but it is quite clear that Khomeini would have been totally undeterred by statements from London, however "firm and unequivocal".

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TO RESIST Iran's lawless behaviour in the name of the liberal principles and traditional pieties of British life would be an honourable response. But we have no longer a firm grasp of those principles and pieties, and the ground on which we should stand has already been undermined. In the past the principle of tolerance, which favours free speech, has also dictated respect for the beliefs and habits of new immigrants to this country. Now the Rushdie case has split that principle apart. Can we defend a book offensive to Muslims and also tolerate violent protest by the Muslim community? Can we proclaim our belief in freedom of expression and, at the same time, be understanding about the desire of true-believers to persecute and proselytise?

IT HAS BECOME fashionable to talk of a "multi-cultural society"—a phrase often preceded by laudatory adjectives such as "rich" or "exciting"—but this appealing idea contains the seeds of a relativism which could mean the abandonment of just those traditions in whose name we can resist the Ayatollah's threats. The picture conjured up by the phrase "multi-cultural society" is an agreeable one: many cultures living peacefully together under one rule of law. What do differences in mores matter as long as the Commission for Racial Equality is there to see fair play? Unfortunately, the nature of law itself and the relationship between it and the individual citizen are the products of a particular culture and are characterised by its nature. The "multi-cultural" concept, therefore, must tend to erode established patterns of law or come into conflict with them.[7]

Examples of this are not wanting. Free speech has been affected by anxiety to avoid offence to ethnic groups. It is now an offence to utter "racist" sentiments, whereas, before the passing of legislation on race, damage or public disorder had to be proved for a prosecution to succeed. Recently, a Rastafarian has claimed successfully that objections by a prospective employer to his dreadlocks constituted racial discrimination. Yet Rastafarianism is, on its own showing, a religion and not a race, and its inclusion within the protection of race relations legislation is a strange extension of the meaning of the word "racial". It is hardly surprising that some of the leaders of the British Muslim community are proposing to take Mr Rushdie and his publishers to court—also on the grounds of racial discrimination. If religion is to be so closely bound up with ethnic identity, why should they not make the same plea? But, in that case, what becomes of the freedom of speech which we are defending against the Ayatollah?

The liberalism that sponsors a "multi-cultural society" is plainly beginning to diverge from that which has made free speech and the unfettered operation of the media one of the fetishes of our time. It is the Rushdie affair which has brought this conflict out into the open. Now some difficult exercises in casuistry lie ahead for anyone who, while wishing to diminish ethnic and religious tensions in this country, places a high value on free speech. Of course, the right to freedom of speech is not absolute. Laws on libel, official secrets, pornography and so on, keep it within the bounds set by society. But those bounds are increasingly questioned and breached by writers and journalists—by those very same people who, in another aspect of their activities, have been the indefatigable missionaries of a "multi-cultural society". Thus, not the least interesting side of the Rushdie affair has been the fragmentation of liberal principles which it has brought about. Virtual contradictions have become actual conflicts.

As for Britain's Muslim immigrants, they too suffer from the contradictions that underlie their protests. For they claim a freedom to demonstrate and to express their discontent which they would probably not have enjoyed in Pakistan or Bangladesh and which they would deny Mr Rushdie. They want the protection of the law on blasphemy extended to cover Islam, but they are also prepared to encourage violence by their rhetoric. They had better stay quiet and obey a law to which they now owe a duty. It is possible to sympathise with Muslim immigrants when they assert their desire to maintain their religious and cultural traditions—possible even to think that, if the British Government is to support Catholic schools, there is no logical reason for not extending the same treatment to Muslim schools—but attempts to control the opinions of other people by force or intimidation cannot be allowed.

The Rushdie case has brought into our ken the disagreeable possibility of Islamic fundamentalism having a fall-out on events in this country. This is a depressing prospect, and when it is combined with incitement from overseas it becomes a threat to law and order. Let us hope, however, that this is only a transitional phenomenon; the children of the present Muslim immigrants are likely to feel more attracted by British society than their parents and less shocked by the consequences of the secularism they see around them. But it does not take many fanatics to start a fire or much in the way of exhortation from would-be prophets in the Middle East to fan it.

SO WHAT CONCLUSION can we reach? That the modern mixing of cultures and moving of peoples around the globe are rendering self-confidence and firm judgment more difficult than in the past. That an interpenetration of values and a queasy consciousness of the relativism of habits and traditions can blunt the edge of belief and confuse the acuteness of understanding. That no sooner are we all agreed that Khomeini's sentence on Mr Rushdie is a monstrous infringement of our national sovereignty and a threat to the right of free speech than we discover that we can do little to vindicate that sovereignty and that our own attitudes towards free speech are ambivalent. That none the less, with our imperfect logic and divided minds, we must persist in the paths of a Western tradition of humanism which has gradually taught us that heretics and apostates

[7] Some damage has already been done to law and order in this country by the failure to prosecute those Muslims who have echoed the Ayatollah in calling for Mr Rushdie's death. In terms of a "multi-cultural society", however, the decision of the Bradford police to take no action was, no doubt, a wise one, "cooling" the situation—to use the word generally employed to camouflage compromise with lawlessness.

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from a religion must not be immolated to it. That we should not be led out of this way by crusades against modish evils such as "racism" or "sexism".

Writing in *The Sunday Times,* Gerald Priestland gave it as his verdict on the Rushdie case that "we have all had a useful lesson in multi-cultural incomprehension". Well, he can say that again. But a Panglossian optimism would be needed—a style, one fears, not too far from the manner of professional writers on religion—to believe that this was the last or even the most unpleasant revelation of its kind. The pressure of those who know what they believe on those who are none too sure of what they ought to believe can lead to an unequal struggle. Even if we succeed in thwarting the cultural imperialism of Ayatollah Khomeini, Western liberal values will not remain unchanged in the turmoil of wandering peoples and beliefs that the late 20th century has loosed upon the world.

As for Mr Rushdie, one can only repeat the words of the Duke of Wellington when asked for advice: "Sir, you are in a devilish awkward predicament, and must get out of it as best you can." The word "devilish" seems peculiarly appropriate here.

# AUTHORS

**Douglas Evans** is a policy consultant and sometime staff writer for *The Globe and Mail* of Toronto and *The Times* of London. His publications include *The Politics of Trade* (1974), *The Politics of Engergy* (1976), and *Western Energy Policy* (1978), all published by Macmillan. He is currently carrying out research for a trans-atlantic fictional trilogy set in the period of the American Revolution.

**Nicholas True** (b. 1951) took first-class degrees in Classics and History at Peterhouse, Cambridge. In the period before the 1979 General Election he joined the Conservative Party Research Department, and from 1978-82 was Personal Assistant to Lord Whitelaw; he was seconded as a civil servant to the Department of Health and Social Security, where he served as Special Adviser to the Secretary of State, and has since then been a director of Public Policy Consultants, advising the corporate sector on dealings with national and local government. He contributes to a number of political publications and occasionally writes and lectures on medieval historical themes.

**Felicity Carver** has spent most of her life in Scotland. Having worked in a publishing office for a couple of years, she went on to read English at Edinburgh University. She has had a number of short stories published, including ones in *New Edinburgh Review, Scottish Short Stories 1986,* and *Punch.*

**Vernon Scannell**'s latest collection of poems, *Soldiering On: Poems of Military Life,* has just been published by Robson Books, who brought out a volume of autobiography, *Argument of Kings,* in 1987. He has also recently published a collection of children's poems, *The Clever Potato* (Hutchinson, 1988).

**François Duchêne** was Director of the Documentation Centre of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe in Paris from 1958-63 and Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1969-74. He has been a leader writer for the *Manchester Guardian* and wrote for *The Economist* for a number of years. His publications include *The Endless Crisis* (ed. 1970), *The Case of the Helmeted Airman,* a study of W.H. Auden (1972), and *New Limits on European Agriculture* (1985). His article is a revised version of a piece which appeared in the French journal *Commentaire* (No.43, Autumn 1988).

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**Jean-François Revel,** the French philosopher and critic, writes a regular column for *Le Point* in Paris. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish,* was published in 1985 by Weidenfeld (London) and Doubleday (New York).

**Gillian Tindall** is a novelist, biographer, and historian. Her published work includes *City of Gold* (1982), a "biography" of Bombay; *The Born Exile* (1974), a biography of George Gissing; and *Rosamund Lehmann: An Appreciation* (1985). Her latest novel, *Give Them All My Love,* was published in April by Hutchinson.

**Andrew Shelley** read English at Trinity College, Cambridge. He lived for a period in Greece, returning to England to study Samuel Beckett at Worcester College, Oxford (he is writing a book on Beckett's later prose). His criticism on Wilde, Ford, contemporary poetry, and fiction has appeared in various magazines and journals; a previous contribution to ENCOUNTER, "The Word & the World", appeared in April 1988.

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**Dennis O'Keeffe** is Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Education at the Polytechnic of North London, and a member of the Advisory Council of the Social Affairs Unit. His previous articles in ENCOUNTER include, "Swann-Song of Prejudice" (December 1985) and "Roots of Madness" written with James McNamara (September-October 1988).

**Max Beloff,** Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration, University of Oxford, from 1954-74, and Principal of the University College at Buckingham, 1974-79, was created a life peer in 1981.

**Malcolm Rutherford** has been abroad and will continue his Theatre column in our next issue.

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# LETTERS

## Jews, Indians & Pushy Mamas

WHEN DOES "transportation" in cultural and especially theatrical matters become distortion? Ah, if it was only so criminally simple as in the examples cited by Melvin J. Lasky in his "Berlin Notebook" (ENCOUNTER, April 1989). Even if one is not a strict interpretationist in the law, and allows for broad constructions and views, it is clear that Shylock is not Othello and something vile has happened when the Moses in Rossini's lovely opera becomes a guerrilla with a Kalashnikov shooting up multinational enemies in grey-silk suits and smoked glasses.

But the problems for the "Negative Cultural Tax" lie ahead in more complicated cases. Even a pleasant film directed by John Schlesinger offers theory dilemmas for the guardians of literary integrity and, over and beyond that, moral or humane values. Schlesinger's new movie, *Madame Sousatzka,* is based on a novel published in 1962 by Bernice Rubens. She placed it among refugees from Hitler's Europe. A tyrannical music-teacher turns an eleven-year-old Jewish boy into a piano prodigy. But the boy in the Schlesinger film is now an Indian called Navin Chowdhry and his "Yiddishe Mama", Shushila, is played by Shaban Nazni. One critic (Alexander Walker in the *Evening Standard,* 23 March) thought that "the racial change works unexpectedly well, in fact . . . ."

SHOULD ONE leave it at that? The pragmatic justification, "working well", is evidently enough to take the matter of arbitrary transformation of literary texts out of the hands of your inspectors, Lords Annan, Beloff and Quinton. The pleasure principle is decisive, and here the cinema-goer evidently "enjoys". Does the Jewish-mother image also "benefit"? One would suppose so, for in a world still aflame with anti-Semitism one less stereotype of a pushy Jewish mama, driving her offspring to climb to the top and make loads-of-money, is a loss we can well afford.

But, then, what about the Indian mother? In a world no less aflame with xenophobia about Hindus and Muslims, can we afford new stereotypes for old? From San Francisco to "the new Punjab" of Britain's Bradford, there are prejudices enough about "Asian pushiness". Isn't that the way that Salman Rushdie made his way to the top as the most famous novelist-in-hiding in the world?

I am afraid that your three wise Lords will need a Solomon in their ranks (Lord Denning, perhaps? or an American legal cousin like Oliver Wendell Holmes?) before coming to a judicious conclusion. Who wins, who loses?

But it could be that your "Negative Cultural Tax" will prove in time to be utterly ferocious in its deterrent effect. All re-writers—in the case of *Madame Sousatzka,* it is Ruth Prawer Jhabvala who, being both Jewish and Indian, thus has the neutrality of a Solomonic schizophrenia—will leave everything as it is. Caesar is Caesar, and not Al Capone. Shylock is not a Rothschild (or even a Yuppie on Wall Street). The Samurai are Japanese warriors, and not Yul Brynner on a white horse. The Punic Wars took place against Carthage, and (aside to all film producers and stage directors) *all other versions should be destroyed*!

JOHN L. MCCALLISTER

*Oxford*

## The Roots of German Identity

### *A Short Alternative Version*—BY JOHN M. WEINER

I TRUST that one may suggest an alternative view to Harold James's "Roots of German Identity" (ENCOUNTER, January 1989)?

If national identity means a distinct personality with distinctive characteristics, Germany's roots reach well beyond mere foreign "models" or "templates", to use James's words. Moreover, the concept of an "invented nationality" seems essentially flawed despite Germany's late laborious ascent to statehood. Germany's identity has been inherited from its own long stormy past.

Germany's roots stretch back to well before 9 A.D. when a small Teutonic contingent under Arminius defeated three Roman legions in the Teutoburger Wald near Detmold. This rout was a great turning-point in European history. It set the Roman Empire's frontier back to the Rhine. It prevented the latinisation of what eventually became Northern Germany. It denied a high culture to the many barbarous tribes to the North. It encouraged them to sweep South with a low culture and to barbarise Western Europe during the Dark Ages. Arminius (Hermann) was commemorated by a great monument, completed under Bismarck in 1875. By the 1930s, the *Hermannsdenkmahl* had become a Nazi shrine.

The numerous Teutonic clans and tribes which roamed in and out of the north German plain in the first millennium moved in a world of pagan myths and legends of gods, goddesses, giants, dwarfs and Aryan maidens who became the cast of Wagner's 1876 opera epic *Der Ring. The Ring* is opera's colossus and was an intoxicating brew for Bismarck's Germans. For Hitler and his Nazis, Wagner's *Ring* was Valhalla on earth. From the 18th century onwards, music—sacred and profane—proved a powerful instrument for expressing unifying emotions. Wagner's was the culmination.

The order of the Teutonic Knights with their great black cross and great black eagles was one of the three powerful military and religious orders which sprang from the Crusades. *"Der Deutsche Orden Deutscher Ritter"* was founded in 1190 at Acre by Baltic Prussians. Within a generation they had become the fierce, cutting edge of the rise of Prussia on the Baltic and the *"Drang Nach Osten"*. This was the most important feature of the history of Germany until the 14th century, recurring at intervals up to the present. Since World War II, Germany's identity has again been split between East and West and we can already sense the schizophrenic unease created by Gorbachov's *détente* on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Its Eastern borders have always contained the main threat to Germany's identity.

THE GROWTH of Teutonic Prussia from the Baltic to the Rhine between the 12th and the 19th century was the axis for the eventual unification of Germany. After the many Teutonic clans and tribes had swarmed across the Roman Empire and beyond, they gradually began to settle into a multitude of feudal communities in their homelands. These owed allegiance to a pyramid of knights, barons, earls, dukes, archdukes, princes and kings of which the Holy Roman Emperor sometimes was and sometimes was not a part. As late as the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia there were some 1,800 states or estates: 1,475 belonged to knights, with an average population of 300 each and no voting rights in the Imperial Diet. The remainder, ruling over a population of some 20 million, consisted of 51 imperial cities, 63 ecclesiastical principalities, 170 temporal principalities and 6 kingdoms. In 1816, after the Congress of Vienna, there were still 39 different states. Even Bismarck's first *Reich* under the first German Kaiser contained 4 king-



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doms, 5 grandduchies, 13 duchies, 3 free cities, and the *Reich* territory of Alsace-Lorraine.

Feudal rule over a hugely fragmented territory has been Germany's history since the early Middle Ages. Leonard Krieger's *The German Idea of Freedom* concludes that the German term *Freiheit* came to have a quite different range of meanings from its English cognate. It was used to describe the freedom of Germany's territorial rulers from Imperial control and meant that *Freiheit* and service to the State, indeed rigid subordination thereto, were not antithetical as was the case in the Anglo-Saxon world. The Prussian and German traditions of discipline and order were a native growth and not imported by Russian Imperial guards serving at Potsdam, *pace* Harold James.

Fragmentation under feudal and feuding knights and self-appointed "aristocratic" autocrats led to centuries of civil and religious strife. These have left deep human, social and psychological scars on German history and its body politic. In his classic *The Pursuit of the Millennium* Norman Cohn has shown how situations of mass disorientation and anxiety have been a fertile soil for millenarian visions and violent mass animosities such as anti-Semitism. Medieval Germany was the cradle for such movements in Europe.

The phantasy, as Cohn shows, of a third and most glorious dispensation entered into the common stock of European but mostly German mythology in the 13th century. The same phantasy of the three ages reappeared in the 18th century, in the historical theologies of German idealist philosophers such as Fichte and Hegel. Then came the Marxian dialectic of the three stages of primitive communism and a capitalist class society to be followed by a communist Utopia in which the state would wither away. In 1923 the publicist Van Den Bruck coined the phrase "The Third *Reich*"—there was no second—which was to last a thousand years. At the turn of the century, Nietzsche had phantasised in agonised Alpine solitude about Aryan superman. All this found a ready audience in the despair of an utterly defeated and frustrated nation such as Germany after 1918.

THE DEFEAT of Prussian-led Germany in 1918 brought the abdication of the Kaiser, a humiliating Treaty, political and social disorder, devastating inflation and mass unemployment. The defeat, it was said, had been due to a conspiracy of Jews and Communists. Germany had been stabbed in the back (*Dolchstoss im Rücken*). No true Aryan Germans—"the chosen race"—could or would tolerate either defeat or humiliation. All Germany's past and all its myths called for vengeance, for the extermination of non-Aryan peoples and the establishment of the thousand-year *Reich*. Thus raved and ranted the very non-Aryan Austrian corporal Adolf Hitler, to thunderous applause and fatal effect.

All of this and more belongs to German identity and its roots. I know of thinking Germans aware of their past and still haunted by the possibility that at some future date the incubi of their violent history might re-emerge. Those incubi have roots which stretch far and deep into those woods beyond the Teutoburger Wald.

JOHN M. WEINER

*Tring*
*Hertfordshire*

OF COURSE nations often like to look back to long histories, and of course observers are occasionally able to select similarities in behaviour across gaps of centuries, or even millennia. Mr Weiner certainly seems confident about revealing the grand sweeps of history. But linking Hermann the Cheruscan and Adolf Hitler seems to me about as plausible as seeing Vercingetorix as the prototype of Charles de Gaulle or Boadicea as Mrs Thatcher. Most countries really have violent and bloody pasts. My article and book simply try to explain what was new about late 18th- and 19th-century German nationalism, and why it proved so explosive. It is historically a harder task, but nevertheless an essential one, to show how and why the universal, civilised, and humanistic values of the Enlightenment can lead to anti-universal, and anti-humanitarian ideologies.

HAROLD JAMES

*Princeton University*

## Hook on "Skoblin"

I AM PUZZLED by one point in the fascinating article by Walter Laqueur on "The Strange Lives of Nikolai Skoblin" in your March issue. Professor Laqueur characterises Beneš's act of turning over the forged incriminating material on Tukhachevsky and the Red Army Marshals to the Kremlin, as an act of "monumental stupidity which contributed to the extinction of the Czech republic two years later".

Beneš was a staunch Czech patriot and an ardent disciple of Thomas Masaryk who was both a Wilsonian idealist and a scholar well aware of the true nature of Bolshevik-Leninism. But at the time Beneš was acutely aware that the Germans constituted a greater threat to the territorial integrity and survival of Czechoslovakia than the Soviet Union. Granted that he was not a Kremlinologist or Soviet expert—after all, the analyses and predictions of the experts on Soviet behaviour show no greater consensus than the predictions of professional economists on our economy. Still, Beneš had the documents in his possession, and the German agents who were using him as a conduit may have pretended to him to be secretly hostile to Hitler. If he gave the documents credence, he could legitimately fear that in a conflict between the German *Reichswehr* and the Red Army, the Soviet Union would lose and Czechoslovakia, its ally, would go down to defeat with it.

On the other hand, if Beneš had genuine doubts about the incriminatory documents, how could he resolve them without leaking word about their existence? It may be that he raised the question of their authenticity with the Soviet Ambassador at Prague to whom he finally gave them, and who probably assured him that the Kremlin had plentiful ways to determine how authentic they were. It would be perfectly natural for Beneš to assume at the height of the rhetorical war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union that Stalin would not needlessly destroy the leaders of the Red Army. Communist domestic and international propaganda about the war Hitler was planning to wage against the Soviet Union, as outlined in his *Mein Kampf*, had reached a pitch of hysteria.

I believe that Beneš was convinced that the documents were on the whole genuine. But even if he had some doubts about them, it seems to me to be much too harsh to characterise his action as one of "monumental stupidity". How could he know whether or not Stalin had other evidence? And if Stalin did, how would he react to the news that Beneš had withheld evidence affecting the welfare of Czechoslovakia itself?

What seems to be true is that Beneš had more insight into the character of Stalin than Lenin, Trotsky, and all the Kremlinologists of the world. Stalin has been truly called by Ronald Hingley "a genius of evil". He sent more innocent people to their doom in a month than all the Czarist despots of the past combined. It may require a literary or psychological genius to make him explicable. No one has done so yet.

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# *Life & Letters Today*

*New York City*

NAKED TRUTH: **France and the United States have been bosom buddies since Lafayette was here, but these are the times that try men's souls. The US Postal Service plans to issue a stamp to honour the bicentennial of the French Revolution. It will show the female images of *"Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, which symbolise the Revolution. (Liberty's image is most famous from a Delacroix painting.)**

**But last week officials revealed that the stamp will lack a small detail: the breast that tumbles from the torn blouse will not have a nipple.**

**The Postal Service's explanations were as confusing as a garden maze at Versailles. One official said the nipple disappeared when the picture became stamp-size: "We're talking about miniaturization. You lose details." But the Bureau of Engraving said it had orders to remove the nipple. A Postal Service spokesman claimed the design is in the French mode: "They brushed out the central part of the nipple [on their stamp], and we followed suit."**

**Did the French really tamper with their own national symbol? *Mais non*. "After all", said a French official, "a pretty drawing of a naked woman is always beautiful."**

*NEWSWEEK*

*London*

TELEGRAMESE: *Was ex-President Nixon wise to choose Sidgwick & Jackson as the publisher for the British edition of his book, "1999"? The company's telegram address is:* **Watergate, London.**

*DAILY TELEGRAPH*

*Hanoi*

AGIT-PROP: **Hoping to repair its frayed international relations, Viet Nam has amended its Constitution to delete condemnation of France, Japan, the United States, and China.**

**In the third sentence of the Preamble, for example, the phrase "the Japanese, French and American imperialists" has been changed to "the aggressors". The "anti-French resistance" has been changed to "the anti-colonial resistance", and the "the war of resistance to US aggression" to "the war against aggression".**

*ASSOCIATED PRESS*

*New York City*

EVASIVE ACTION: *What can people do when they encounter friends in public but don't feel like talking? Enid Nemy of "The New York Times" suggests putting on a blank, preoccupied face, the kind that discourages intrusion. Ms Nemy discovered other tactics. Donald Brooks, a set designer, carries a newspaper. He waves hello, and up goes the reading material "to block eye contact". Beverly Voelbel, a theatrical producer, carries a large portfolio case so "I can open it up and pretend I don't see people." Edward Coffey, a career consultant, said, "If you keep answering in one syllable, most people get the message unless they're complete fools."*

*INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE*

*London*

TOUR DE FRANCE: **Your Literary Editor (writes W. H. Weston-Davies) describes the winning Booker Prize novel as a *tour de force et de main*. These expressions were coined by French surgeons in the 17th century, but describe two totally contrary methods of amputating a diseased leg.**

*THE TIMES*

*New York City*

DISSENT & INSULT: *What could be more amusing, and more pitiable, than the battles among scientists who let politics contaminate fact? At least things are less violent now. Ten years ago, opponents poured water over E. O. Wilson's head to discourage him from giving an American Academy for the Advancement of Science address on sociobiology. Now, disputants over dinosaur extinction merely try to extinguish one another's careers. Nothing new in all this. As the scientist Martin Lister said in the 17th century:*

> **"Sure I am, until the History of Nature, and more particularly that of Minerals and Fossils is better look'd into, and more accurately distinguish'd, all Reasoning is in vain. It is to be observed, where men are most in the dark, there impudence reigns most, as upon this Subject: They are not content fairly to dissent, but to insult everybody else" (Quoted from "A Journey to Paris in the Year 1698").**

*NEW YORK TIMES*

*Peking*

PRISONER FEELING: **The Chinese have reformed their tourist plans to include a special journey to all the places filmed in Bernardo Bertolucci's "Last Emperor of China". It will trace the life and death of Pu Yi, and the official "China Tourism News" reports that the itinerary has now been cleared by all government agencies.**

**Recommended is a special visit to the Penal Labour Camp "Fushun" which is "only an hour's drive from the city of Chenyang"—where the Emperor was "re-educated" in the years 1950-59, and out of a war criminal, a good citizen of the People's Republic was made. "If the visitors are curious they could look further into Pu Yi's life as it then was by putting on his penal uniform and spending an hour or two in his cell . . . ." Video films, a meal in a tin bowl, and a wool blanket would be supplied, and the extra "prisoner feeling" costs only 30 yuan (or five pounds). The tour offer concludes with an alternative arrangement: "You can also spend the night in the air-conditioned Guest House of the Re-education Camp . . . ."**

*DER TAGESSPIEGEL*

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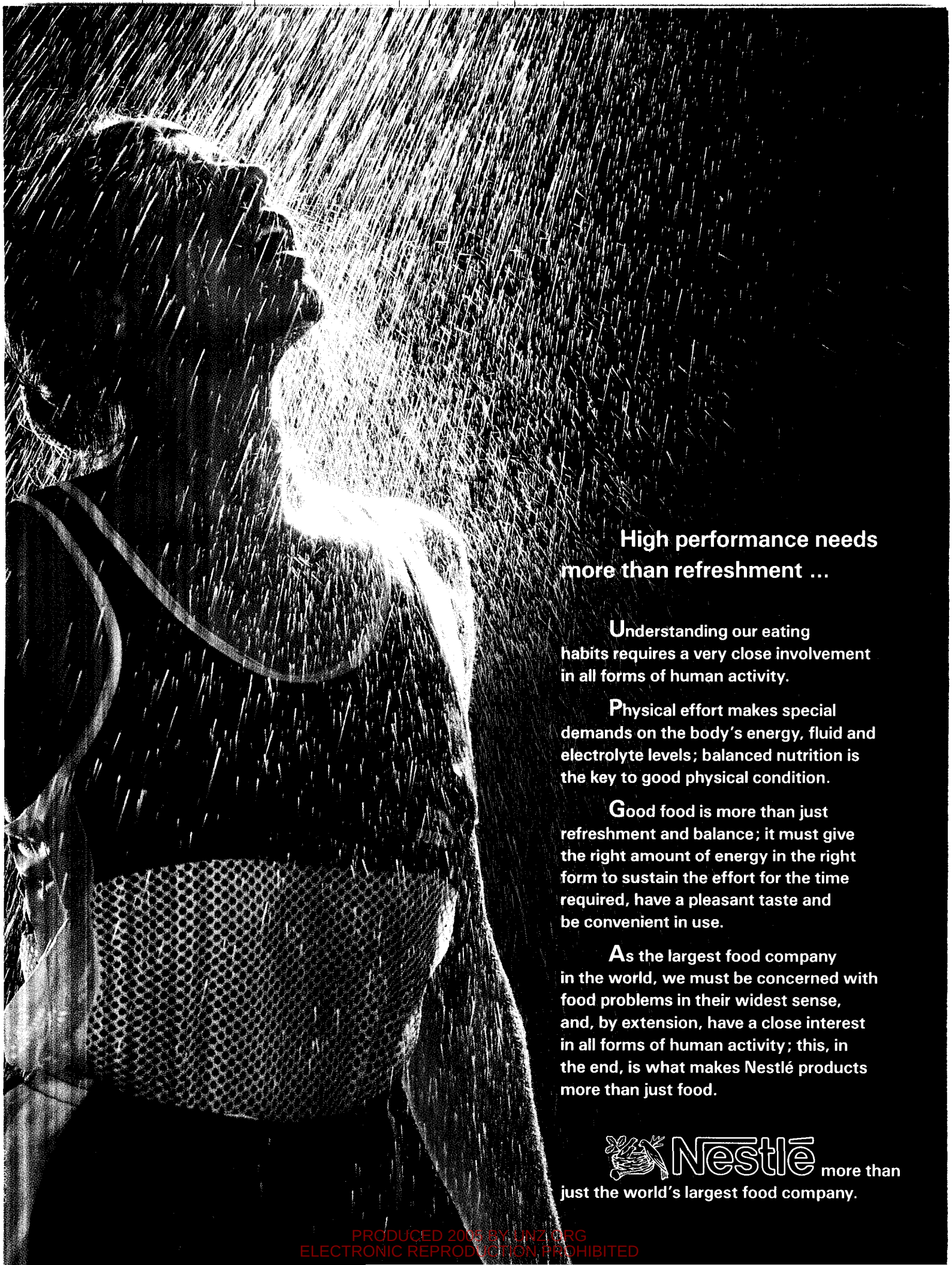

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Translated by Arthur Goldhammer

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